THE SEPARATES
OR
STRICT CONGREGATIONALISTS
OF
NEW ENGLAND

S. L. BLAKE, D.D.

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With an introduction by
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Introduction

By Prof. Williston Walker, d. d.

Among the more important of the consequences of that vast religious upheaval in eighteenth century New England, of which Whitefield's preaching was the most striking episode, was the revolt against the conservatism, formalism and rigid ecclesiastical discipline of the established churches of these colonies, to which the title, "Separatist Movement," has usually been given. The "Great Awakening," as the revival in general has been called, well deserves its fame as the most wide-spread and intense spiritual quickening in New England history. No other epoch of New England story has witnessed so generally diffused an interest in spiritual concerns or has beheld so extensive a manifestation of the visible working of the divine Spirit upon the hearts of men as the years 1740, 1741 and 1742, when the revival was at its height. It stands in retrospect like a mountain peak in colonial religious history above the monotonous level characteristic of the eighteenth century.

But the "Great Awakening" is not remarkable only for its accessions to the churches and its quickening of the life of the spirit. In some respects its methods and its characteristic manifestations were

unparalleled in New England history. It was distinguished far beyond any revival in this region beside, by fervent appeals to the feelings resulting in emotional excitement sufficient oftentimes to produce striking physical effects, and by such a sense of the divine presence and of the reality of unseen things as led many who came under its power to claim visions and spiritual gifts not granted to Christians in more ordinary times. These more unusual and extravagant manifestations were opposed, indeed, by the vast majority of the ministry of New England; but they were wide-spread and impressive among the humbler and more ignorant subjects of the "Great Awakening."

Born of the intenser manifestations of the revival and emphasizing thus its more emotional and transitory aspects, the Separatist movement had in itself from the first the seeds of ultimate dissolution. Its adherents laid weight on bodily effects as evidences of the working of the Spirit of God. They denied the necessity of an educated ministry. They believed themselves so gifted with the "key of knowledge," as to be able to discern by spiritual intuition who were truly Christians and who were not. They regarded discipline as a prime duty. Holding such opinions, prevailingly recruited from the more ignorant and less well-to-do portion of the population, and persecuted by the heavy hand of the colonial government for many years, it is no wonder that the Separatists as a whole ended in disaster.

Yet these traits were far from exhausting the characteristics of the Separatist movement, and had they been all, that movement would have lost much of the significance which properly belongs to it. The Separatists were in large degree a protest against the departure of eighteenth century Congregationalism from its earlier ideals. The lapse of a century since the planting of the New England churches had resulted in great modifications. The dying out of the fire of the original spiritual zeal in which the colonies were planted was followed by a decreasing intensity of religious experience and a diminishing emphasis in preaching on the possibility and necessity of a conscious "conversion," such as had prevailed in early New England. Since men had little of striking religious experience to tell, the custom of "relations" of God's dealings with the soul passed into comparative disuse as a condition of entrance into church-membership. New England preaching, till awakened by the revival, had been growing formal and increasingly essay-like for two generations. And, in Connecticut at least, a state-supported ecclesiastical organization, approaching Presbyterian government in several of its features, had taken the place of the freedom of earlier Congregationalism.

Most disastrous of all was the Half-Way Covenant system. Begun by earnest pastors in the seventeenth century in an honest desire to hold young people under the watch and discipline of the

churches, it really lowered the spiritual tone of the churches as a whole. It established a half-way house between a neglect of Christian privileges and a full acknowledgment of the claims of the gospel. Those who had been baptized in infancy by reason of their parents' Christian profession were now allowed and encouraged to bring their own children for baptism and a similar church-membership even if conscious themselves of no regenerative change. Such imperfect members satisfied the conditions of their "half-way" status if they gave intellectual assent to the main doctrines of the Christian faith and agreed to submit themselves to church discipline. The chief evil of the system was that it encouraged men and women to do something to which they and the church alike ascribed value; but something, nevertheless, far short of a full consecration to Christ and his service. Having "owned the covenant" and entered into "half-way" membership, they too easily satisfied themselves that they had done all possible for themselves and their children.

Against all these serious modifications of earlier Congregationalism the Separatists protested. They were not the only ones in our churches who antagonized these evils. The more strenuous supporters of the "Great Awakening" who never left the fellowship of the established churches did so very generally. But the Separatists were determined and consistent opponents of these things, and in their attitude they are amply justified by later Congre-

gational history. Whatever their errors and shortcomings in other respects,—and the following narrative shows that these were fatally numerous,—the Separatists were right in their opposition to many serious spiritual declensions in the churches of their day.

This movement, never told heretofore with the fulness that it deserves, has found a painstaking and sympathetic historian in Dr. S. L. Blake, and students of eighteenth century New England religious story will welcome his narrative of the rise, growth and decline of the Separatists. The episode is one well deserving the labor and care which he has bestowed upon its presentation.

A Foreword

In "Some Aspects of the Religious Life of New England," Dr. George Leon Walker, speaking of the Separates of Connecticut, says, "The subject deserves a fuller investigation than it has ever yet received." He also speaks of it as "a chapter which still awaits its proper treatment at the hands of some painstaking and sympathetic historian." In preparing the second volume of the history of the first Church of Christ, New London, Connecticut, the writer found a considerable wealth of material concerning this unwritten chapter of ecclesiastical history in New England. He also became aware that more was within reach, much of which had never seen the light. He was led to further investigation and found so much that he resolved to gather the material into a volume. Besides, on studying the subject, as it presented itself, the writer, while recognizing the many foolish extravagances of the "New Lights," as they were often called, yet found himself so in sympathy with many of their contentions that he seemed to himself so far forth to fulfil Dr. Walker's condition of a "sympathetic historian."

The story is a somewhat thrilling one. It throws a strange light upon religious liberty in Connecticut between 1742 and 1784. The materials were gath-

ered from many sources. The following are the principal authorities consulted:

Diary of Joshua Hempstead, covering the period when the movement was in its strength.

Records of the First Church of Christ, New London.

Original Records of the Separate Church in Preston.

Original Memorial of the same church petitioning the legislature for relief from taxation in support of the Established Church.

History of the Preston Separate Church by A. A. Browning, Esq., of Norwich.

History of the Newent (Lisbon) *Separate Church,* in manuscript.

Colonial Records of Connecticut.

Annals of Saint James, New London, by R. A. Hallam, D. D.

History of New London, by Miss Caulkins.

History of Norwich, by Miss Caulkins.

History of Windham County, by Miss Ellen D. Larned.

Gleanings from the History of Windham County, by the same author.

History of the Enfield, Conn., Separate Church, by Rev. O. W. Means, PH. D., a most excellent monograph.

History of Montville.

History of the Suffolk Congregational Associa-

tion, Long Island, by Rev. William I. Chalmers of Riverhead, L. I.

Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut.

History of Connecticut, by Benjamin Trumbull, D. D.

Early History of Christ Church Parish, Guilford, by Rev. William G. Andrews, D. D.

Great Awakening, by Rev. Joseph Tracy.

Congregationalists in America, by Rev. A. E. Dunning, D. D.

History of Congregationalism, by Rev. George Punchard.

History of Congregationalists in Massachusetts, by Rev. J. S. Clark, D. D.

Baptists in Norwich, by Denison.

History of Beneficent Church, Providence, R. I., by Rev. J. G. Vose, D. D.

Some Aspects of the Religious Life of New England, by Rev. George Leon Walker, D. D.

History of the Congregational Churches, by Prof. Williston Walker, D. D.

One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the South Congregational Church, Middletown, Conn., by Rev. Frederick W. Green.

Journal of Rev. Jacob Eliot, Goshen, Conn., in manuscript.

The New Englander, 1853, pp. 195 f.

The Diary of Rev. Ezra Stiles, D. D., Vol. I.

Backus' Church History.

Joel S. Ives' Address at the 250th Anniversary of the church in Stratford.

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I

THEIR RISE AND CAUSE

As a fruit of the Great Awakening of 1740 a number of churches arose in southeastern Connecticut, to which they were mostly confined, which were seceders from the standing order, and were called Separates, and New Lights. They were Congregational in their principles and practices, their polity and belief. But they flatly refused to be governed by the Saybrook Platform. As this was made the established order in Connecticut, without redress after 1743, they put themselves into open and pronounced antagonism to the State. They stood on the original Cambridge Platform, and preferred to be called, as they called themselves, "Strict Congregationalists." As such they could secure no exemption, as did Baptists and Episcopalians, from taxation to support the standing order. November 4, 1745, at the prolonged trial of its pastor, Rev. Philemon Robbins, for alleged irregularities in his ministerial conduct, the church in Branford stood by him and voted, "That we renounce the Saybrook platform, and cannot receive it as a rule of government and discipline in this church; that we declare this church to be a Congregational church; that we receive the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the only perfect rule and platform of church gov-

ernment and discipline; that though we receive the scriptures as the only perfect rule, yet as we know of no human composure that comes nearer to the scriptures in matters of church government and discipline than the Cambridge platform, so we approve of that for substance, and take it for our platform, agreeably to the word of God." Several other churches in Connecticut took similar action. The Branford church does not seem to have become a Separate church, although other churches did which formally adopted the Cambridge platform.

This religious movement seems to have begun at New London, in 1742 and 1743, where a separate society was organized March 6 of the latter year. As this movement grew out of the Great Awakening, and the conditions preceding it, we naturally look to these to find its immediate causes, for the loose practices, from which this wide-spread spiritual quickening was a rebound, were the primary reason why this separation from the churches of the established order took place.

To appreciate the full force and significance of the great spiritual movement in 1740, it will be necessary to go back, and trace our way to it through the spiritual dearth which came upon the churches with ever deepening intensity during the last quarter of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries. The period from 1630 to 1660, the period during which the men and women who planted New England were on the scene, has been

called its golden age. Soon after the close of this period we begin to hear of religious declension. In 1679 a synod called by the legislature of Massachusetts left on record an acknowledgment of a "great and visible decay of Godliness" in the churches. There had sprung up neglect of divine worship, disregard of sacramental observances, pride, profanity, Sabbath-breaking, and kindred vices unknown to the first generation of the inhabitants of New England, who founded her colonies, her churches, and composed their membership. They were "strict in doctrine, in discipline, and in practice." A gentleman of eminent character, who had lived in New England seven years, during its golden age, said that he did not once hear an oath, or see a drunken man. But as those who planted the colonies passed away, and a new generation came upon the stage, there was a sensible decline in godliness. The children did not inherit the virtues of the fathers. As generation succeeded generation there was a still greater decline. There was sound preaching, much fasting and prayer, on the part of some for the special influences of the Holy Spirit, yet there was a general decline in the power of godliness, a general ease and security in sin on the part of the great mass of the people. This spiritual condition prevailed throughout the New England colonies. Men who had the interests of God's kingdom at heart were alarmed.

There were revivals of greater or less power in

a few places, but no general awakening. In Northampton there were several seasons of deepened and quickened religious sensibility. The greater part of the young people in the town were reached, and expressed concern for the salvation of their souls. In 1721 the town of Windham, in Connecticut, under the ministry of Rev. Samuel Whiting, was visited by a work of grace, which resulted in gathering eighty persons into the church. The whole town was moved by a supreme joy. Persons of all ages were reached, and came together to seek the Lord their God. The First Church in New London shared, to some extent, in this work. But while some places were thus blessed, the larger part were not; iniquity abounded; religion decayed throughout the land. In many of the towns little change was wrought in spiritual life, or in the moral tone of society. These revivals were not of the sort that reaches and remedies these radical evils. In some cases, at least, there does not seem to have been that deep conviction of sin which drives men to God, and compels them to turn to him. They were of that kind which arouses the sensibilities, but does not change the will. Mr. Parsons, who was settled in Lyme in 1730, tells us that he urged his people much to good works and to attend upon the Lord's Supper. Many followed the pastor's suggestion, under the impression that saving grace was in no sense necessary to attendance upon that ordinance. Hence no relation of experience and no experience of re-

newing grace were required of those who came into the church. Consequently numbers were received who, in the searching light of the Great Awakening, were aroused to the fact that they were still in their sins, and that their eternal hope was resting on sand. The pastor was obliged to tell them that he feared that few who had joined the church hitherto under his ministry had been really converted. Matters kept going from bad to worse in the churches until 1740, when the Great Awakening arrested the tide and profoundly stirred the churches; men were convicted of sin and awoke to the need of something deeper and more radical than good works;—that radical change called the new birth.

The immediate cause of this powerful movement was the preaching of two sermons by Jonathan Edwards, at Northampton in Massachusetts, upon Justification by Faith. He took strong and decided grounds against the doctrine of justification by works, which had been preached, and had grown and spread among the churches in the form of the Half-Way Covenant, and the doctrine that the Lord's Supper is a converting and saving ordinance —a doctrine strenuously advocated by Solomon Stoddard, the predecessor and maternal grandfather of Edwards. This opinion gained distinguished advocates. Dr. Charles Chauncey, of Boston, said, "The divinely appointed way, in which persons become members of the visible Church of

Christ, is utterly inconsistent with the supposition, that, in order to their being so, they must be subjects of saving faith, or judged to be so." This was the liberalism of the eighteenth century, which gave birth to the more advanced free thinking of the nineteenth century. Its presence in the churches, and its wide acceptance by them between 1660 and 1740, explain why the revivals of those years produced so little radical change, and had so little power to arrest the moral and religious decay. They also help to explain why the Great Awakening itself met with bitter opposition from some whom we should expect to be its advocates, and why, in some cases, so disastrous results followed, as in the Separate movement.

Edwards' views of divine truth came into the prevailing religious conditions, like a stream from a divine fountain. All previous efforts to secure a revival and to promote spiritual growth, had laid special and almost exclusive emphasis upon outward reform, without reference to a change of heart, till the notion came to prevail that, by diligent attention to good works, men could, in an important sense, merit and win the favor of God, without formal and definite submission of the will to him. When Jonathan Edwards appeared upon the scene and, in the year 1734, boldly proclaimed the doctrine of justification by faith, and preached the absolute necessity of a radical change of heart, as the only way of securing salvation, the religious world

was startled. The state of spiritual declension had become alarming. Edwards' preaching, severe as it seems to us of a later generation, was like refreshing showers coming after a long drought, to refresh and gladden the thirsty earth.

To appreciate fully the low spiritual condition of the churches, at the time when the Great Awakening began, it will be instructive to trace the steps leading to this condition.

First of all is to be named the practice of the Half-Way Covenant, by which the churches, and in some cases the pulpits, became filled with people who laid no claim to a change of heart. This was both a fruit, and a cause, of the conditions upon which the revival of 1740 broke, as the light breaks in upon the darkness. It was a fruit, because the churches of New England, founded upon the doctrine stated by Hooker, that none but those who had experience of renewing and regenerating grace were suitable to become members of Christ's visible body, did not depart from it until they had lost the deep spiritual life of their founders. It was a cause, for after the churches had adopted this looser practice their spiritual decay became more rapid. The period of its widest adoption was that in which the lowest type of piety prevailed in the churches. Instead of being, as it was originally intended, a means of retaining under watch and discipline of the church those who were born of godly parents, but were slipping away, it became the method of entrance into

covenant relations with the church for those who could advance no claim of birthright even, much less of personal experience of renewing grace. In the seasons of religious interest previous to the deeper, more radical work of the Great Awakening, large numbers of persons who had a quickened sense of obligation were admitted to Half-Way Covenant membership. Later on all restrictions were, in many cases, removed, and such persons were admitted to the privileges of full fellowship. Dr. George Leon Walker says, "But however conscientiously devised, this scheme wrought inevitable mischief to the spiritual life of the period" of the Puritan decline. It was a sort of easy resting-place between utter neglect of religion, and a full surrender to its claims. So the descendants of the people, who, several generations before, had come out from home, and church relationship, as a protest against formalism, which destroyed the spiritual life and power of the churches, dropped into the very same error. So strongly intrenched in the practice of the churches did the Half-Way Covenant become that, even under the powerful influences of the Great Awakening, it continued to hold open their doors to those to whom Hooker would have refused admission. And it continued in a measure to determine their policy, with reference to the admission of members, until the nineteenth century. It was against this practice of filling the churches with unconverted men and women, and of installing men as pastors who had no

experience of renewing grace, that the Separate movement was a protest. Curiously enough, we have here the spectacle of a separation from the descendants and churches of the Separatists and Puritans of New England, for the same reasons which caused those Separatists who came to Plymouth, and those Puritans who, ten years later, came to Salem and Boston with Endicott and Winthrop, to separate from the Church of England.

Another cause of the religious decline was the state of war in which the colonies were almost without cessation for more than fifty years. The French war broke out in 1689. The next year the expedition against Quebec was undertaken, for which the colonies furnished troops. Queen Anne's war broke out in 1703, and with it the horrors of Indian incursions and their awful atrocities. In 1701 was the abortive expedition against Canada by sea and land. In 1735 and later were other disturbances of a similar character. Either the hostilities of the Indians, or the assaults of the French kept the colonies in a state of constant apprehension, which was particularly annoying to Connecticut. Although the peace of Utrecht, in 1713, put an end, for the time, to active hostilities between the French and English, yet the French continued to incite the Indians, who pillaged the English settlements, and killed, or carried away captive many of the settlers. The history of the colonies, from 1700, and earlier, until the close of the Revolution, reads

like the story of a running fight, with only here and there an important break in the narrative.

War, in whatever form, is never helpful in matters of religious growth. It awakens alarm. It arouses the worst passions of men. It disturbs society and engrosses men's thought with matters which do not make for spiritual life. In this disturbed state, of so long standing, religious life in New England sank to a low ebb. The churches became an easy prey to those materialistic views and practices which robbed them of their spiritual power.

Civil strife was yet another cause of that decline, of which a contemporary said, as early as 1701, "It is too observable, that the Power of Godliness is exceedingly Decaying and Expiring in the Country." The attempts of Sir Edmund Andros to bring all New England under his control in 1686; the attempted exercise of authority in Connecticut in 1687, in connection with which was the hiding of the charter in the Charter Oak; the quarrel of Thomas Dudley with Massachusetts from 1702 to 1715; the constant suspense in which the people of Connecticut were kept by the controversies with the neighboring colonies, over the boundary lines, some of which were not settled till nearly the middle of the eighteenth century, were not conducive to the development of deep religious life. Massachusetts lost her charter in 1684. Proceedings looking to similar action against Connecticut were

instituted in 1685. Political events of so serious moment, which imperatively commanded men's attention, and which so vitally concerned their material interests were not favorable to that attention to spiritual things, which is essential to high religious states.

Yet another source of irritation was the introduction into New England of the Established Church of Old England—the very organization from which the Separatists of Plymouth and the Puritans of Massachusetts had come out. If the efforts of "The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel," had been confined to its original purpose —to carry the gospel to the Indians of North America—or if it had been content simply to plant churches where there were members of its own communion, the case would have been different, and created less disturbance. But the society enlarged its scope so that it became "A Society for Aiding the Church of England in America," and it soon proceeded to plant its churches where the ground was abundantly occupied, and supplied with the ministrations of the gospel, though not after the Episcopal order.

The first fruits of the efforts of the Propagation Society in Connecticut was the founding of a mission in Stratford in 1706. Rev. Dr. Andrews of Guilford says that this mission "was undertaken chiefly for the benefit of recent emigrants at Stratford, who were already Episcopalians." For twenty

years this was the only mission of the Propagation Society in Connecticut. Samuel Johnson said, "I never once tried to proselyte dissenters, nor do I believe any of the other ministers did." However, George Keith, a converted Quaker, the first missionary of the Propagation Society to come to America, suggested measures which he believed "would effectually contribute to the proselyting of the main body of the dissenting people to their Ancient mother, the Church of England." And yet, upon his representation, the Society came to regard other parts of America as more in need of their aid than the two Congregational colonies, which were everywhere supplied with ministers and meeting houses; so that as late as 1728 the Society had but two missionaries in Connecticut, and three in Massachusetts. But after this the Propagation Society pushed its work with full vigor in the New England colonies.

A startling result of the labors of the Propagation Society was the conversion to Episcopacy, in 1722, of Dr. Cutler, the rector of Yale College, and five neighboring Congregational clergymen. This defection caused deep and wide alarm. The belief gained ground that there was a conspiracy among some of the prominent clergymen to go over to the Church of England, and take the people of Connecticut with them. The fear was all the greater because these efforts seemed to be backed up by governmental and ecclesiastical authority from abroad.

It also was justified by the fact that several prominent divines had already taken this step, and many more seemed about to do so. The secession of Seabury and Punderson of North Groton, a few years later, did not allay the fear. After Punderson had been to England to receive orders, he returned to North Groton, and established a Church-of-England parish by the side of the Congregational church of which he had been the pastor. His effort drew so largely from the old church, that, at one time, it seemed as if it would be obliged to suspend. He claimed to have several hundred communicants on his roll. It looked dubious for a time for the old Puritan church. It is not surprising that the hearts of the Congregationalists of North Groton sank within them. However, the old Puritan church remains, while Punderson's movement left nothing behind it.

The action of Thomas Dudley, and an edict of Queen Anne in 1713, served to give impetus to the work of the Propagation Society in Massachusetts, which at once undertook to plant its churches in several of the larger towns outside of Boston. Connecticut seems to have been favorable ground for its operations, for the Society found it difficult to meet the demands upon it. There was a growing eagerness on the part of young men to take orders in the English Church. This did not tend to allay apprehension. Besides, the usage of the English Church with respect to the sacraments of baptism

and the Lord's Supper, was directly contrary to original Congregationalism, as expounded and practiced by Hooker, Davenport, and others of the fathers of New England. Their view of church order, as we have seen, debarred from the sacraments a large body of people of exemplary lives whom the Anglican Church considered as eligible to them. This, says Dr. Andrews of Christ Church, Guilford, "abundantly justified the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in planting missions in this Christian commonwealth." He adds, "that the Church of England steadily increased in this commonwealth was due far less to 'aggressive work' on the part of the Anglican clergy than to the fact that the Anglican Church supplied what Puritanism had taught men to value as their lives, and New England Congregationalism, with an honorable, though misguided zeal for the holiness of God's house, had placed almost out of their reach." Dr. Andrews speaks as a churchman who believes that men may enter the kingdom of God by natural birth and nurture. The New England Congregationalist was a churchman who believed originally that a man must be born again, from above, to enter the kingdom of God. He therefore insisted that all who sought admission to the Church and its sacraments should have and relate a personal experience of renewing grace. As we have seen, the looser practice of the Half-Way Covenant had already obtained a foothold in some of the leading churches, when Episcopacy appeared

on the scene. But the great body of the New England Congregational churches resisted it. Stoddard's theory that the Lord's Supper was a saving ordinance, and that unregenerate men of reputable lives ought to be admitted to it, aroused a storm of opposition. Strong men were on both sides. The time was favorable for Episcopacy. It offered to men what the great body of the Congregational Churches denied them. The controversy continued until gradually these churches, wearied by the conflict, yielded the ground, as an act of self-defence, and as a measure of peace.

The feeling was deep. Discussions about church order and discipline were heated. The defection of leading men, like Dr. Cutler of Yale, added fuel to the fire. The Propagation Society instructed its clergy to reclaim dissenters "with a spirit of meekness and gentleness." But some of the dissenters refused to be reclaimed. And therefore these disputes, and the defection of prominent men, distracted the minds of the people, diverted them from their obligations as professed disciples of our Lord, and tended to lower their spiritual tone.

As some believed, all these controversies and disturbances, and the tendency to less rigorous discipline in the churches, which was gaining ground, were introducing "a grievous decay of piety" into New England. Samuel Mather wrote in 1706, "It is a time of much degeneracy." In 1714, Samuel Whitman of Farmington said, in his election ser-

mon, " 'Tis too Evident to be denied, that Religion is on the Wane among us. 'Tis languishing in all Parts of the Land." Dr. Increase Mather, who died in 1723, wrote, "There is a grievous decay of piety in the land and a leaving of the first love, and the beauties of holiness are not to be seen as they once were. The very interest of New England seems to be changed from a religious to a worldly one." In 1730 William Russel of Middletown said in a sermon, preached before the legislature, "The Country improveth in Knowledge and Skill in Worldly business, but in Religious Knowledge, doth it not manifestly decay?" In 1725 efforts were made to have the legislatures of the colonies call a synod to consider "What are the miscarriages whereof we have reason to think the judgments of Heaven upon us call us to be more generally sensible, and what may be the most evangelical and effective expedients to put a stop unto those or like miscarriages." This effort was opposed by the Episcopal clergymen of Boston, with Dr. Cutler in the lead, and the synod was never held. This was a final blow to all hopes of remedying spiritual evils by the action of civil authorities. A similar effort had been made in Connecticut in 1714. The legislature recommended that a strict enquiry into the state of religion be made in every parish, to find out, if possible, "What are the sins and evils that provoke the just majesty of Heaven to walk contrary to us in the ways of His providence; that thereby all pos-

sible means may be used for our healing and recovery from our degeneracy." The picture is a dark one. But there is too much reason to believe that it is not overdrawn. Old church records preserve melancholy evidence that too much cannot be said of the degeneracy of those times. That the heated religious controversy had not a little to do with bringing such a state to pass cannot be doubted. There was not then the breadth of mind to tolerate so radical departures from the prevailing order, as the introduction of other denominations, such as the Baptists, Quakers, Methodists and Episcopalians. It should be said, however, that the coming of other denominations into New England rendered this service to the Congregational churches; it put an end to efforts to correct spiritual abuses and revive spiritual life by an appeal to the legislature.

Another reason for the declining spiritual state of the churches, especially in Connecticut previous to the Great Awakening, was the relation in which they stood to the legislature, which was a sort of standing ecclesiastical body having in charge their spiritual as well as material interests. For example, the legislature of Connecticut, called the Saybrook Synod, which drew up the famous Platform, called the convention at Guilford, whose action was framed into the stringent legislation of 1742 and 1743; gave permission to bodies of people to be constituted into churches; often took the lead in settling church troubles, and performed similar ec-

clesiastical functions which are foreign to legislative bodies to-day. Besides, after 1743, the churches under the Saybrook Platform were a state establishment as rigorous, exacting and unbending, as that against which the Separatists of Scrooby protested.

This relation of the churches to the legislatures of the colonies is also seen in certain political functions to which church membership was considered essential. In Massachusetts, in the early days of the colony, a man could neither vote nor hold office unless he were a church member. Similar restrictions were placed upon the right of franchise in the New Haven colony previous to its union with the Connecticut colony in 1665; that is, certain civil privileges were connected with religious observances. This was an inheritance from the State churches of Europe. For example, admission to the Lord's table carried with it certain civil rights which were infringed by exclusion from it. In some cases men qualified for civil office by partaking of this sacrament. Dr. Ezra Stiles, in his diary, tells of one Mr. Moulton of Newport, who was not a church member, but who "to qualify for an office had received the sacrament at an Episcopal church" in Boston. Therefore, to exclude one from the Lord's table was, in some cases, regarded as a penal offence, for which the civil government inflicted punishment on the church official who refused the sacrament. This, in a measure, made the Church,

which is the body of Christ, a part of the civil government, and was not helpful to its spiritual life.

New England Congregationalism, at its birth, as we have seen, was a vigorous protest against such secularizing of the Church. The Cambridge Platform of 1648 was strong on this point. The seventeenth chapter of that document affirms that "as it is unlawfull for church officers to meddle with the sword of the Magistrate, so it is unlawfull for the Magistrate to meddle with the proper work of the church." Then when the Separates, ninety years after the Cambridge Platform, protested against the interference of the civil authorities with the affairs and discipline of the Church, they had behind them the opinion and practice of the early New England Congregationalists, especially in Massachusetts. There was more of interference in ecclesiastical matters in Connecticut than in the Bay Colony, throughout the eighteenth century. Consequently the Separate movement was stronger and more pronounced in the former, under the jurisdiction of the Saybrook Platform, which was framed to express an authoritative control and supervision in the discipline of the church, which are repugnant to the spirit of Congregationalism. Taking the view of church order and discipline that they did, the Separates pursued the only course open before them. As time went on changes took place. Legislative supervision in ecclesiastical matters assumed less and less pronounced forms, and slowly died out; so

that before the Revolution this reason for the Separate movement had practically ceased. The religious limitations put upon civil rights and franchise came to be things of a remote past. Men were eligible to office irrespective of their church relations.

But with these changes came others also of a more spiritual nature, as we have seen. The bars which led into the church were let down, and often little or no restriction was put upon entering into its fellowship. The Boston Synod of 1662 had decided that persons baptized in infancy, "understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly covenanting before the church, wherein they give themselves and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church," might have their children baptized, even though they themselves were avowedly unregenerate. This practice in many churches soon grew into the admission of such unregenerate persons to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This was letting down the last bar, and added its share to the spiritual degeneracy, which, we have seen, came upon the churches before the great Revival, and in not a few cases continued after it. That is, some of the churches, which the Fathers of New England planted as a protest against such loose practices, came to occupy the very ground against which they had been planted as a protest. As early as 1657 it had been maintained, in Connecticut, that "parishes

in England, consenting to and continuing meetings to worship God were true churches; and that members of those parishes, coming into New England, had a right to all church privileges though they made no profession of faith and holiness upon their hearts."* From that date on this view persistently pushed its way for fifty years, knocking at the door of the churches for admission, till the doors were flung wide open. Tracy says, "The desire to enjoy the credit and advantages of church-membership, aided by Mr. Stoddard's influence, carried the day at Northampton, and the practice soon spread extensively in other parts of New England." Add to this state of things a state establishment, such as existed in Connecticut, under the Saybrook Platform, and we have the spiritual and ecclesiastical conditions which the Separatists at Scrooby and Gainsborough found confronting them in the first decade of the seventeenth century. It would be strange if in the eighteenth century, as in the seventeenth, there were found none to protest against the same evils, and come out from them.

The tendency of the conditions which we have considered, was to destroy all spiritual life. Men came to regard conversion as not essential, and joining the church as a saving act. They believed that they were to be saved by their own good works, rather than through faith in the merits of a crucified Redeemer. Preparation for the kingdom of God, with

*Trumbull's Hist., Conn., Vol. I, p. 251.

most churches, was a matter of correct external conduct, rather than of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The difference between the Church and the world rapidly disappeared. Until Edwards came upon the scene and preached his famous sermons on justification by faith, the trend was downward, in spite of every effort to arrest it. The degeneracy, which had come upon the churches before the Great Awakening, kept on after it. Governor Law, in 1743, called upon the people of Connecticut to confess their sins, which, he said, were "the great neglect and contempt of the gospel and the ministry thereof, and the prevailing of a spirit of disorder . . . and all other vices which prevail among us." This was not the only voice raised in lamentation over the spiritual conditions following the Great Awakening. When it is remembered that Governor Law's words were spoken concerning the prevalence of sins subsequent to the Revival, we shall see how deep-seated were the evils which had crept into the churches before it, and how strong was their hold upon them. Prof. Walker says, "The half century following the Great Awakening was a period of spiritual deadness." It was against the Church as a state organization, and against the prevailing loose methods of church order and discipline, that the Separates protested. Many of them were fruits of the Revival. Others were professed disciples, who had received new impulses and quickening. Neither class could consent

to relapse into the cold formalism which seemed to them to destroy the life of the churches. The only way open to them was the way out, and they took it.

II

THEIR FINAL SEPARATION

We should naturally expect so wide and deep a religious movement as the Great Awakening, to affect favorably the spiritual condition of the churches, and that they would all be deeply engaged in it. But the contrary was too largely true. Among the Episcopalians, Dr. Cutler, formerly rector of Yale College, said, "It would be an endless attempt to describe the scene of confusion and disturbance occasioned by him [Whitefield]; the divisions of families, neighborhoods and towns, the contrariety of husbands and wives, the undutifulness of children and servants, the quarrels among teachers, the disorders of the night, the intermission of labor and business and husbandry, and gathering the harvest," and much more of the same sort. Dr. Cutler in the same paper describes the scenes attendant upon the awakening as "laughing, yelping, sprawling, fainting." Of Gilbert Tennent he had similar things to say, calling him "a monster, impudent, noisy." He called the preaching of this evangelist, "beastly brayings." Dr. Charles Chauncey, pastor of the First Church in Boston, led those in the Congregational churches of Massachusetts who opposed the revival. He published a volume entitled, "Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in

New England," in which he undertook faithfully to point out "the things of a bad and dangerous tendency in the late and present religious appearance in the land." As early as 1741 a fierce controversy broke out between the "New Lights" and the "Old." Ecclesiastical and legal methods were taken in Connecticut to repress the revival methods which were then in use. But all this opposition tended rather to fan the flames. August 11, 1741, the Hartford Association voted that no weight was to be "laid upon those screechings, cryings-out, faintings and convulsions which sometimes attend ye terrifying Language of some preachers and others, as evidences of, or necessary, to a genuine Conviction of Sin, humiliation, and preparation for Christ." Similar action was taken by other associations, and thus the challenge was thrown down, and the battle was soon on in all its fury. Of course there were strong men who entered into the work heartily. Doubtless there was some occasion for criticism. The promoters of the Great Awakening were often indiscreet, sometimes censorious in their judgment of others who did not reach their standard. Whitefield was a man of intense emotions. He awakened similar feelings in others. Because of his alleged excesses the faculties of Harvard and Yale issued testimonies against him. The opposition spread in Connecticut. Backus says, "A great majority of the ministers and rulers through the land disliked this work, and exerted all their powers against it."

November 24, 1741, a general consociation of the churches of the colony of Connecticut was convened at the suggestion of the legislature, and at its expense, at Guilford. This body consisted of "three ministers and three delegates from each association." Professor Williston Walker says, "This body, of which the colony bore the expenses, met at Guilford, November 24, 1741; and enjoys the distinction of being the last Congregational Synod representative of the churches of a commonwealth called under the auspices of the State." It was convened to consider the practice, which was spreading, much to the alarm of the government and the regular churches, of itinerating, or "going abroad and preaching and administering the seals in another parish without consent of the minister of the parish." It was itinerating of this sort, which, as we shall soon see, got Rev. Philemon Robbins of Branford into trouble. To this convention, assembled at Guilford in 1741, Rev. Mr. Whittlesey of Wallingford proposed the question whether such itinerating were disorderly. It promptly voted in the affirmative. At the next session of the legislature, in May, 1742, this vote of the Guilford convention was framed into the following "Act for regulating abuses and correcting disorders in ecclesiastical affairs," which made it a penal offence for one minister of the Congregational order, or any layman, or any foreigner, to go into the parish of any clergyman and preach without his invitation. The act provided:—

That if any ordained minister, or any other person licensed as aforesaid, to preach, shall enter into any parish not immediately under his charge, and shall there preach or exhort the people, he shall be denied and secluded the benefit of any law of this colony, made for the support and encouragement of the gospel ministry, except such ordained minister, or licensed person shall be expressly invited and desired to enter into such parish, and there to preach and exhort the people, by the settled minister, and the major part of the church and society within such parish;

That if any association of ministers shall undertake to examine or license any candidate for the gospel ministry, or assume to themselves the decision of any controversy, or as an association to counsel and advise in any affair that by the platform, or agreement above mentioned, made at Saybrook, aforesaid, is properly within the province and jurisdiction of any other association, then and in such case every member that shall be present in such association so licensing, deciding or counseling, shall be each and every one of them, denied and secluded the benefit of any law in this colony, for the support and encouragement of the gospel ministry;

That if any minister, or ministers, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall presume to preach in any parish, not under his immediate care and charge, the minister of the parish where he shall so offend, or the civil authority, or any of the committee of said parish, shall give information thereof, in writing, under their hands, to the clerk of the parish or society where such offending minister doth belong, which clerk shall receive such information, and lodge and keep the same on

file, in his office, and no assistant or justice of the peace, in this colony, shall sign any warrant for the collecting any minister's rate, without first receiving a certificate from the clerk of the society, or parish, where such rate is to be collected, that no such information as is above mentioned, hath been received by him, or lodged in his office;

That if any person whatsoever, that is not a settled and ordained minister, shall go into any parish, without the express desire and invitation of the settled minister of such parish, if any there be, and the major part of the church, or if there be no such settled minister, without the express desire of the church or congregation within such parish, and publicly preach and exhort the people, shall, for every such offence, upon complaint made thereof to any assistant or justice of the peace, be bound to his peaceable and good behavior, until the next county court in that county where the offence shall be committed, by said assistant or justice of the peace, in the penal sum of one hundred pounds lawful money, that he or they will not again offend in the like kind; and said county court may, if they see meet, further bind the said person or persons, offending as aforesaid, to their peaceable behaviour, during the pleasure of the said court;

That if any foreigner or stranger, that is not an inhabitant of this colony, including as well such persons as have no ecclesiastical character, or license to preach, as such as have received ordination or license to preach, by any association or presbytery, shall presume to preach, teach, or publicly exhort, in any town or society within this colony, without the desire and license of the settled minister, and the major part of the church of such town or society, or

at the call and desire of the church and inhabitants of such town or society, provided that it so happen that there is no settled minister there, that every such preacher, teacher, or exhorter, shall be sent, as a vagrant person, by warrant from any one assistant or justice of the peace from constable to constable, out of the bounds of the colony.

This extraordinary legislation had its origin, in part, at least, in the New Haven Consociation, as appears from instructions given to their delegates, whom they sent to the Guilford council. The suggestions to the consociation came from Rev. Samuel Whittlesey of Wallingford, who had a grievance, and a point to gain. Further, the association of New Haven, which met at Wallingford, September 28, 1742, voted its unanimous thanks to be communicated to the legislature to be convened at New Haven, October 14, 1742, for having passed the act just quoted, in May of the same year. The vote reads as follows:—

To the Hon. General Assembly, etc., convened at New Haven, October 14, 1742.—May it please this honorable assembly to permit us, the Association of the county of New Haven, regularly convened in the first society of Wallingford, September 28, 1742, to lay before you our grateful sense of the goodness of the General Assembly in May last, in so caring for our religious interests, and ecclesiastical constitution; and our just apprehensions of their wisdom, in making the statute, entitled, An act for regulating abuses, and correcting disorders, in ecclesiastical affairs; and pray that it may be continued in force.

All this points to the New Haven Association, and to the Rev. Samuel Whittlesey as the origin of the remarkable act just quoted.

This act held against exhorters, lay preachers, evangelists, and all who separated themselves from the established order, and practically abolished religious liberty in Connecticut. It all sounds very strange to modern ears. It did not leave a loophole. It put a strong fortress around the established order. But one act more needed to be taken to destroy all religious liberty in the colony. And that was taken in May, 1743. Trumbull well says, "The law was an outrage to every principle of justice, and to the most inherent and valuable rights of the subject. It was a palpable contradiction, and gross violation of the Connecticut bill of rights." Baptists and Episcopalians were accorded privileges which were denied to Congregationalists, who dissented from the established order of the Saybrook Platform, and were constituted under the Cambridge Platform into separate churches. Trumbull says, "Even in Connecticut, the Episcopalians were allowed to preach and collect hearers, and erect churches, in any of the ecclesiastical societies, in opposition to the established ministers and churches. The Baptists were allowed to do the same. The law was therefore partial, inconsistent, and highly persecuting." As we have seen, the law of 1742 was an enactment of the votes passed at Guilford the previous November. It was therefore, says Trumbull,

an expression of the strong "opposition of heart which there was in the Arminians and old lights, to the work of God, and to the zealous and faithful promoters of it." Those who, for doctrinal or other reasons, separated themselves to form Separate churches were made to feel the grip of the law. In May, 1708, a statute of religious toleration had been passed by the legislature, which was reaffirmed by that body in October of the same year, when the Saybrook Platform of September was given legal authority. By this statute, those whose sober consciences led them to dissent from that Platform, could do so without being held to answer therefor. In May, 1743, this act of May, 1708, was repealed. The legislature coupled this repeal with a distinct promise to those who were not Congregationalists; but those who, while preferring the Congregational faith and polity, wished to withdraw from the established system, of which the Saybrook Platform was the basis, and organize under the more Congregational Cambridge Platform, were now forbidden all right to do so. Thenceforward the Saybrook Platform was made legally binding upon all Congregationalists at least. Connecticut was now under as rigorous an ecclesiastical establishment as that from which the Fathers had fled in England. This continued until the act of 1743 was repealed in 1784, and liberty of conscience was granted to Christians of every name.

A few cases of the rigor with which the law was

enforced will suffice to show, on the one hand, how bitter was the opposition which the Great Revival awakened in the established churches, and on the other hand how sorely those were made to suffer who, for conscience' sake, withdrew from these churches. The church in Salisbury was organized in 1744, upon the Cambridge Platform, in defiance of the vote of the legislature. Rev. Mr. Leavenworth of Waterbury, Rev. Mr. Humphrey of Derby, and Rev. Mr. Todd of Northbury, were among those who assisted at Mr. Jonathan Lee's ordination, as the first pastor of that church. For this offence these three men were suspended by the association to which they belonged. Mr. Benjamin Pomeroy of Hebron was brought before the Assembly because he said that the late laws of the colony were calculated to encourage persecution, and to lead men to break their covenants, while the law to prevent ministers from going into other towns to preach was without reason, and contrary to the Word of God. He was tried, and the Assembly sentenced him to forfeit his lawful salary until the next session of the legislature, and to pay the costs of his prosecution, £32, 19s., 8d., and give bonds in fifty pounds for his good and peaceable behavior meanwhile. The case of Rev. Philemon Robbins of Branford is another of like character. The Baptists of Wallingford invited him to preach for them, as there was a deep religious interest among them. He agreed to go. A remonstrance was sent him by

forty-two members of Mr. Whittlesey's church. Two ministers of neighboring churches wrote advising him not to go. He had promised to go. The case seemed urgent. He went. He was tried by the consociation, and found guilty. He was deposed from the ministry. Various charges were brought against him, showing how deep was the feeling among the established churches of the colony against the state of things brought about by the revival. The vote expelling Mr. Robbins from the ministry was as follows:—

This consociation do now upon the whole judge and determine the said Mr. Robbins unworthy the ministerial character and Christian communion; and accordingly do, *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,* according to the word of God, and the powers invested in this consociation by the ecclesiastical constitution of this government, depose the said Mr. Philemon Robbins from his ministerial office and ministerial and pastoral relation to the first church in said Branford, and debar and suspend him from communion in any of the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The church, however, stood by their pastor, and he continued to minister to them.

The attempt to enforce the Saybrook Platform was vigorous and determined, but was not always successful. Every possible measure was taken both by the legislature, and by the leaders among the clergy, the former usually following the lead of the latter, to suppress zealous, experimental preach-

ers and people. Ministers were put out of associations and consociations; and men and women were excluded from communion for the offence of going to hear these preachers. Such facts show how violent was the spirit of opposition aroused by the Great Awakening. Further action of the legislature in October, 1743, was taken in obedience to a purpose to exclude all obnoxious preachers from abroad from the colony. It was intended to prevent men like Whitefield and Tennent from coming into Connecticut. It provided that, if any foreigner or stranger, not an inhabitant of the colony, should return into it, after he had been transported out of it by order of the courts, and should preach or teach or exhort in any town or society within its borders, it should be the duty of the proper officer of the law to cause the offender to be arrested and brought before him, and, in case of his guilt, to bind him "in the penal sum of one hundred pounds lawful money, to his peaceable and good behavior, and that he will not offend again in like manner." Then the offender should be summarily ejected from the colony, and be required to "pay down the cost of his transportation."

The repeal of the act "for the ease of such as soberly dissent" from the Saybrook Platform, in May, 1743, left no relief for dissenters from the established mode of worship, except upon application to the General Assembly, which was growing more rigorous in its enforcement of conformity. This act of repeal gave liberty to sober dissenters to apply

for relief, and it was promised that they should be heard. If they had any characteristics which distinguished them from Presbyterians or Congregationalists, they might expect indulgence upon taking oath, and subscribing to the declaration provided for such cases; but otherwise none need expect indulgence. Thus liberty of conscience was put within the reach of Baptists, Episcopalians and others, who were thus relieved from taxation to support the established churches and their ministers. But for dissenting Congregationalists there was no redress. The adoption of the Cambridge Platform served only to distinguish those who adopted it as Congregationalists, and liable to the full penalties of the law.

Mr. John Owen of Groton was arrested for uttering hard speeches against the laws and the officers of the government, and for advocating principles calculated to bring the government into contempt. Mr. Owen and Mr. Pomeroy were brought before the assembly in May, 1744, to answer to the charges made against them. Mr. Owen made some slight concessions and was dismissed on paying the cost of his prosecution. Mr. Pomeroy, as we have seen, did not come off so easily. These are examples, which might be considerably multiplied, of the strenuous measures which were "taken to suppress the zealous, experimental preachers and people, both by the legislature and the leaders among the clergy," many of whom, Trumbull tells us, were

"preachers of a dead, cold morality, without any distinction of it from heathen morality, by the principles of evangelical love and faith." Zeal, experimental knowledge of religion, earnestness in preaching, were termed enthusiasm, and enthusiasm was disorderly. While the civil authorities were rigorously enforcing the laws, the clergy were adopting measures no less severe in suspending members from their communion for the sin of going to hear zealous preachers like Whitefield, Wheelock, Pomeroy and others. Nor did these pastors always stop to ask the churches, but in some cases suspended offending members by their own act. In some cases, Trumbull tells us, this suspension lasted ten or twelve years, till the pastors were dead and succeeded by others. In many instances consociations ordained men against the opposition of a large majority, not only of the church, but of the legal voters, as will be seen later. Not only were members expelled from churches, but also earnest, godly ministers were put out of associations because of their zeal.

It must be borne in mind that the action of the New Haven Association in 1741 secured the calling of the council at Guilford in November of that year. The action of that council resulted in the rigorous restrictive legislation of 1742, and finally, in 1743, in removing all relief for dissenters from the established order who were Congregationalists. The action of the legislature in 1743 was taken with a view

to suppress enthusiasm, and was directly the result of action taken by the General Association at New London, June 15, 1742. After recognizing the fact that God had visited his people and stirred up great numbers to ask what they must do to be saved, and expressing thankfulness for this visitation, and after expressing the belief that the enemy of souls was very busy in efforts to destroy the work of God, the Association said:—

We think it our duty to advise and entreat the ministers and churches, of the colony, and recommend it to the several particular associations, to stand well upon their guard, in such a day as this, that no detriment arise to the interest of our great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Particularly, that no errors in doctrine, whether among ourselves or foreigners, nor disorders in practice, do get in among us, or tares be sown in the Lord's field.

That seasonable and due testimony be borne against such errors and irregularities, as do already prevail among some persons; as particularly the depending upon and following impulses and impressions made on the mind, as though they were immediate revelations of some truth or duty that is not revealed in the word of God: Laying too much weight on bodily agitations, raptures, extasies, visions, &c.: Ministers disorderly intruding into other ministers' parishes: Laymen taking it upon them, in an unwarrantable manner, publicly to teach and exhort: Rash censuring and judging of others: That the elders be careful to take heed to themselves and doctrine, that they may save themselves, and those

that hear them: That they approve themselves in all things as the ministers of God, by honor and dishonor, by good report and evil report; That none be lifted up by applause to a vain conceit, nor any be cast down by any contempt thrown upon them, to the neglect of their work: and that they study unity, love and peace among themselves.

And further, that they endeavour to heal the unhappy divisions that are already made in some of the churches, and that the like for the future be prevented: That a just deference be paid to the laws of the magistrate lately made to suppress disorders: That no countenance be given to such as trouble our churches, who are, according to the constitution of our churches, under censure, suspension, or deposition, for errors in doctrine or life.

The hand of Eliphalet Adams, pastor of the church in New London, was undoubtedly in the foregoing. Davenport had branded him as unconverted, to the great horror of all who knew him and his godly life. A large separation from his church took place the next November. He was moderator of the meeting. The action taken as quoted above seems to have been shaped by his experience and that of others who had met with the same treatment from Davenport. But whether his hand was in the document or not, the sentiment embodied in it naturally fits what we should expect him to say. In any case the legislature took this action up and framed it into rigorous statute the following year.

It therefore appears that all the opposition to the Great Awakening which took shape in civil law,

originated with the established churches. This can be accounted for only by the fact that the deadening effects of the practice of the Half-Way Covenant for almost a century, still remained. Nor did the revival put an end to the practice, so deeply had it become rooted in the very life of the churches. Rather, it limited the effect of the revival. In churches which seemed to share most deeply in the Awakening, the Half-Way Covenant continued with unabated vigor after the revival ceased. If, during the period of awakened sensibilities, the practice was suspended, it reasserted itself, when the period was at an end, in not a few churches, with its old-time vigor. Mr. Edwards' church in Northampton was at the center of the religious interest. Yet in 1749, when he preached his great sermon on the proper qualifications for church membership, so firmly imbedded in the belief and practice of the church were the views which Stoddard had advocated, that this revolutionary sermon cost Edwards his pastorate in 1750. Most of the churches of the council, his own church, and the whole town, were against him. Stoddard had advocated "the Right of Visible Saints to the Lord's Supper, though they be destitute of a Saving Work of God's Spirit on their Hearts." Mr. Edwards, in his sermon, defended the negative of the question, "Whether, according to the rules of Christ, any ought to be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church of Christ, in complete

standing, but such as are in profession, and in the eye of the church's Christian judgment, godly or gracious persons?" The significant thing about the conclusion of this controversy is, that the council was constituted of nine of the principal churches in the neighborhood,—Enfield, Sheffield, Sutton, Reading, Springfield First, Hatfield, Sunderland, Hadley First, Pelham and Cold Spring. There was but a minority to vote for Mr. Edwards and his views. The Great Awakening had not been deep and lasting enough in its effects to eradicate the deleterious practice of the Half-Way Covenant. To do that a strong and evangelical pastor, defending the truth as taught in the Word of God, and laboring for the purity of the church, had to be sacrificed. After the immediate results of the revival the reaction was alarming. So tremendous was the sweep of the decline that, in 1758, Rev. Benjamin Throop in an election sermon said, "There is an awful Decay of Religion . . . the fear of God is amazingly cast off this day. While some are disputing the Personality of the Godhead, and denying the Lord that bought them; others are ridiculing the important Doctrine of Atonement, and casting contempt upon the efficacious Merits of a Glorious Redeemer; many are exploding the Doctrine of free and Sovereign Grace and exalting human Nature under all its Depravity to a situation equal to all its necessities; thereby perverting the Designs of the Gospel, and frustrating, as far as may

be, the Means of our Salvation." The sweep of the pendulum was backward, and it had not yet reached the farthest point. The religious decay which had preceded the revival of 1740 was again in full process, and the Half-Way Covenant was yet to work greater harm to the churches.

Such was the spiritual state of the churches throughout Connecticut and New England. This was the beginning of that schism which marked the earlier years of the nineteenth century, and remains in the Unitarian body. It was against these conditions, and all that went with them, that the Separate movement was a protest. It was attended, as will be seen later, by many false estimates of what constitutes a truly religious character, what is evidence of being a child of God, by much ill-advised and ill-tempered zeal, and by an unwarrantable censoriousness of spirit. But, on the other hand, the foregoing narrative shows that there was not a little in the condition and practice of the established churches to awaken the deep solicitude of earnest souls. The movement may have been ill-advised, but it cannot be denied that there appeared to be good reasons for it. Their alleged grounds for separation uniformly were: "That the standing churches were not true churches, but of anti-Christ; that hypocrisy was encouraged in them, and they could have no communion with hypocrites. They maintained that the church should be pure, undefiled with hypocrisy, and that no hypocrite could abide with them. Upon

this principle the Separate churches set out," says Trumbull. Certainly no criticism of their action can be made at this point.

Several statements of reasons for the movement serve to shed light upon it; especially as they were made by leaders in the movement. Solomon Paine, of Canterbury, wrote a pamphlet on a "Short View of the Constitution of the Church of Christ, and the difference between it and the church established in Connecticut." In this pamphlet he attempted to show that a church established by law is not a church of Christ. He also gave a reason for separation which is in accord with the views generally held by the Separates. "The cause," he says, "of a just separation of the saints from their fellow men in their worship, is *not* that there are hypocrites in the visible church of Christ, *nor* that some fall into scandalous sins in the Church, *nor* because the minister is flat, formal, or even saith he is a minister of Christ, and is not, and doth lie; but it is their being yoked together, or incorporated into a corrupt constitution, under the government of another supreme head than Christ, and governed by the precepts of men, put into the hands of unbelievers, which will not purge out any of the corrupt fruit, but naturally bears it and nourishes it, and denies the power of godliness, both in the governing and gracious effects of it." He went on to say that he knew the established worship to be as idolatrous as that of Nebuchadnezzer's golden image,

and that he could no more support it than Israel could Jereboam's priests which he had made for his calves. Here is expressed the prevailing spirit of the Separates in their withdrawal from the regular churches.

This may be further illustrated by reasons given by other individuals. One man in the North Parish of New London said, "God's having left [the regular church] was a sufficient warrant for his leaving;" another said, "That there was no more of God in the congregation than there was a black dance;" another said "That his dissatisfaction was our selling the Gospel for £400 a year, and his darkness in attending this meeting, that the Spirit told him he should have light upon his withdrawing, and so he found it." A man in North Stonington, where the Separate church and the old church were happily reunited under Rev. Joseph Ayer, in 1827, gave, as his reason for separation, that the pastor discountenanced "public exhorting on the Sabbath at the meeting-house;" that he checked the outcries of the people in time of divine service; that the pastor admitted to the pulpit persons whom he looked upon as not experienced men. A woman in Canterbury gave as her reasons for separation, that Mr. Cogswell did not visit enough, and added sixty-two Scripture texts as explaining her action, among which were Solomon's Song 1 : 7, 8 and Acts xiii-xv. Just how these were related to her action it is difficult at this distance to see. But these are

examples of the reasons given for this movement. Probably the most effective was their well grounded aversion to an establishment in which the affairs of the church were "governed by the precepts of men, put into the hands of unbelievers," as stated by Solomon Paine. Certainly, looking at things from their point of view, no other course seemed open to them but the one they took.

A Separatist, or, a strict Congregational, Church was gathered at Preston, March 17, 1747. Six persons signed the covenant, and took the vows of God upon them. The following statement of their reasons for taking this step is quoted from their records:

This Church is Caled y^e^ Separate Church because y^e^ first Planted; in this: Came ovt from y^e^ old Church in y^e^ Town. which caled it Self Partly Congregational & Partly Presbyterial; who submitted to y^e^ Laws of y^e^ Government to Settle articles of faith; to govern y^e^ Gathering of y^e^ Church & Settlement & Support of its ministers building of meeting houses, Preaching Exhorting &c.: as also y^e^ Church Refuses y^e^ members should Improve there Gifts In Preaching & Exhorting Publicly &c as also were offended at y^e^ Powerful opperations of y^e^ Spirit of God, & did not make Saving Convertion y^e^ necessary terms of Communion: but admitted unbelievers to Communion: also made half members: Baptized there children, &c.

This is a clear and explicit statement of the reasons for the separate movement in Preston. There

were three: State control of the Church, refusal to let the members exercise their gifts in preaching and exhorting, and laxness in the requirements for admission to the church. This statement applies not only to the case of the Preston Separate Church, but to all the others.

The following, also quoted from the records of the Preston Church, recites, six years later, the local causes which led to its organization:

"It pleased ye Lord in ye yeare 1740 to visit this Land with the Remarkable outpouring of his holy Spirit: and ye Light break forth like ye morning: and ye Greate Declentions and Corruptions of ye Churches of Newengland was Descovered, and when it could not be Healed for Both ye true Discipline, Doctrine and Messenger were Rejected we bare our testimony to them and came ovt from them to Carry on ye Worship of God according to our Knowledg of the will of God: and Gathered into Church order: and ye Lord has Graciously owned us ever Sence: which is now Six yeares: at our first Covenanting there was Six: and now there is neare Seventy members."

This record was entered on the books of the Church in 1753-4, by Paul Park, who was minister of the church from 1747 till his death in 1802, at the age of eighty-two; a period of fifty-five years. The records of the doings of this body are prefaced as follows:

A Record of ye Discipline of a Congregational Church of Christ In Preston; which ye Lord hewed out of ye Mountains of wickedness and Bound to-

gether in ye Bands of Christian Love, & Called forth to witness for his Grace and truth: By Declaring what God had Don for there souls, and visibly Covenanting and walking together in all External ordinances of ye Gospill.

These quotations from the records of this Separate Church in Preston are instructive. They give us a hint as to their views of church order and discipline, which were quite at variance with those which prevailed among the established churches. They evidently believed, as did the Separates of England, a hundred and forty years before, that the affairs of a local church should be managed from within itself. As the established churches did not believe, nor practice so, these people felt that there was no fellowship for them within these churches, and withdrew. Their views of the proper qualifications for church membership were so diametrically opposed to those which were commonly held by the regular churches that separation seemed to them to be the only alternative. The separation therefore took place in several of the towns of New London and Windham Counties, to which it was chiefly confined. In Hartford County something of the same spirit existed in Windsor, Enfield, Suffield and Middletown. Trumbull says, "Thus different were the principles, views, and feelings of the two sorts of Christians. The one were humble, docile, and willing to come to the light that their works might manifest that they were wrought in

God. They, like the primitive Christians, continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread together." These were the established churches. Whether Trumbull's picture is true to life some might easily doubt after reading all the facts. Of the Separatists he says, "The others were haughty, bitter, censorious: disaffected to their teachers; disowned the churches with which they had covenanted; and treated their brethren rather as worshippers of Satan than as followers of Christ."

Without doubt there was more or less of the spirit, which justified these words of Trumbull, at work to produce the Separate movement. There was in it more or less misguided zeal and enthusiasm, not tempered by discretion. Nevertheless, the abuses against which the Separates protested actually existed. Their complaint that unconverted people were admitted to the churches was well taken. Probably they were not without reason for feeling that the pulpit of the regular churches lacked power. At any rate, these people withdrew because they saw these evils in the churches, saw no other way to escape them, and in so doing followed the example of the Separatists of Scrooby, who could no longer tolerate the abuses of the English church. Like the latter, the Separates of New England believed that Christ was the head and sole source of authority of the Church, and therefore that the right of self-government was vested in it. The only possible

issue of such a radical difference could be either a retreat on the part of one party or the other, or a separation. The latter was the result.

III

THEIR DOCTRINES

When a body of people, following deep-seated religious convictions, withdraw from those with whom they had heretofore been in fellowship, we naturally enquire as to their tenets. In general, it may be said at this point, to quote Mr. Trumbull, that "Exclusive of some peculiarities, more especially relative to the constitutions of the churches and church discipline, they [the Separates] maintained the doctrines contained in the Westminster Catechism and Confession of Faith." The same author, who cannot be suspected of a leaning towards them, says, that, with respect to their alleged errors, he does not find that they preached or propagated them, and they never taught contrary to sound doctrine, and were evangelical on the doctrine of the Trinity. "The Separatists in Canterbury," says Rev. Robert C. Learned, "retained the same forms of profession and covenant which had been in use in the original church, and which were drawn in the sternest phrase of Calvanism, and this was likewise adopted by the 'Separate Church in Windham.'" Their errors were only such as they are liable to who let zeal outrun discretion and judgment. The Separates did not come out from the original churches on account

of doctrinal differences but chiefly on account of different views of administration.

The doctrines held by the Separates may be learned from two sources. The one is what their enemies say; the other is their own statements. Let us first enquire what the churches from which they came out, say about their views. They were called errors. But they were the beliefs of these people. At this distance, when they can be judged dispassionately, they will not all of them be branded as errors.

In 1744 the Winham County Association appointed a committee to enquire into the case of the Separates. As a result of their investigations they addressed a letter, December 11 of that year, "to the people of the several Societies in Said County." In this address it was set forth that "There has been of late, in a few years past, a very great and merciful revival of religion in most of the towns and societies in this county, as well as in many other parts of the land." They also expressed the belief that the Prince of Darkness had made this awakening an occasion to get in some of his work, in order to destroy men's souls. In this work the ways of the Holy Spirit, it was said, were imitated as nearly as possible "both by setting on imaginary frights and terrors, in some instances, on men's minds, somewhat resembling the convictions of the blessed Spirit and awakenings of the conscience for sin, and also filling their minds with flashes of

joy and false comforts, resembling somewhat, in a general way, the consolations of the Holy Ghost." The address goes on to say that this so-called work of the evil one was not always plainly distinguished from the real work of the Holy Spirit, for there "was some times a mixture of such things with the true experiences of the people of God." Owing to violent and injudicious opposition of some who saw bad things in it, there were those who rashly concluded that the whole was of the devil; "while others, on the other hand, looking on the good, and being persuaded that it was a day of God's wonderful power and gracious visitation, suddenly and weakly concluded that there was little wrong in the appearances, beside mere human weaknesses and unavoidable infirmity." "In the progress of the work," says Tracy, "they believed Satan had succeeded in instigating some to provoke persecution, by which they were hardened more and more in their errors." Many were drawn away after them, partly out of pity for them, and by the wrong conclusion that their sufferings were an evidence that they were right, and partly out of opposition to others whom they thought to be carnal and ungodly men. The address goes on to state what, in the opinion of the Windham County Association, were some of the fundamental errors of the Separates:

1. "That it is the will of God to have a pure church on earth, in this sense, that all the converted should be separated from the unconverted."

From the point of view of the Half-Way Covenant this was doubtless an error. But it is difficult to see what other view could be held to-day by any evangelical Congregational church. The error in this case seems to attach to the plaintiff rather than to the defendant.

2. "That saints certainly know one another, and know who are Christ's true ministers, by their own inward feelings, or a communion between them in the inward actings of their own souls."

There may have been some extravagance connected with this belief that the power to discern regenerate persons was given to the church for its perpetual guidance. But if the principle involved is wrong, then John must have been in error when he wrote his first epistle; and Peter's conduct was unaccountable when, on his miraculous escape from prison, he made his way directly to the house where he knew that the disciples were gathered in prayer for him; and Christ's words were deceiving when he said of his disciples, they "have known surely that I came out from thee," "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

3. "That no other call is necessary to a person undertaking to preach the Gospel, but his being a true Christian, and having an inward motion of the Spirit, or persuasion in his own mind, that it is the will of God that he should preach and perform ministerial acts; the consequence of which is, that there is no standing instituted ministry in the

Christian church, which may be known by the visible laws of Christ's Kingdom."

This was in flat contradiction of the view held by the established churches, and in open defiance of the acts of the legislature of Connecticut, which allowed none but regularly constituted ministers to preach and perform the regular functions of the gospel ministry. As Dr. Walker says, this was a convenient view, for they had among them few persons of superior cultivation. Naturally they fell under the guidance of illiterate persons, chosen from among themselves, whom they ordained as ministers of the Word. This became one great source of their weakness, and very materially limited the sphere of their influence.

In some particulars their view was correct. It is essential that a preacher be "a true Christian;" that he have "an inward motion of the Spirit or persuasion," that it is the will of God that he should preach, and much more that is not specified. If by denying that there is in the Church a standing, instituted ministry, they meant a clerical order, such as is found in prelatical churches, their view was certainly not uncongregational.

4. "That God disowns the ministry and the churches in this land, and the ordinances as administered by them."

5. "That at such meetings of lay preaching and exhorting they have more of the presence of God than in his ordinances, and under the ministration

of the present ministry, and the administration of the ordinances in these churches."

These last items are matters of opinion. The Separates had a right to theirs, for holding which they were not wholly without reason. In proof of these errors the case of Mr. Elisha Paine was cited in the address. He was a man "of much superior ability to the others." It was alleged that he lacked clear ideas of the Trinity, and sometimes used language tinctured with Sabellianism. On the contrary, Trumbull says, "With respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, they preached nothing, I believe, contrary to sound doctrine." In the matter of admitting members they were more strict than the standing churches. It was also alleged, in the address of the Windham County Association, that Mr. Paine said that "it was made manifest to him that Christ was about to have a pure church, and that he had not done his duty in time past in promoting separations and divisions among the people, and that for time to come he should endeavor to promote and encourage separations; and that likewise Christ's own ministers would have their churches rent from them by reason of their not doing their duty in that respect." By this he said that he meant the separation of "those who were converted from the unconverted in the church."

Certainly the contention that unconverted persons and hypocrites ought not to be in the church would strike the average Congregational mind of the

present as quite within the bounds of reason. In State establishments, where all who have been baptized, and live orderly lives, are considered eligible to church membership, the opposite view might prevail. The fact that it did prevail widely in Connecticut, shows how strong was the trend toward the very form of church order from which the Pilgrims and the Puritans revolted.

This is the state of the case against the Separates as presented by the plaintiff. If these are the most considerable errors which were to be found, there is nothing which would be taken seriously to-day. At least, one holding them would not be likely to come under ecclesiastical censure. As the Windham Association entered upon the enquiry with no purpose to screen the Separates, we may believe that their statement is the strongest which could possibly be made. It is then difficult, at this distance, to see why the enginery of the law, and the ecclesiastical machinery of the established churches of Connecticut, should have been brought to bear against the Separates as apostates from a pure faith. There can be but one explanation, namely, that the charges of the Separates against the established churches had too much truth in them. The simple fact is that these people, in many respects, occupied advanced ground, which, at a later date, the churches which sat in judgment upon them came to hold.

The foregoing is the plea of the Windham County churches, which felt the movement directly. The

pastors of these churches were so deeply concerned that they called a convention, or consociation, in Scotland, January 13, 1747, to take these matters into consideration, and to hear the report of a committee appointed to enquire into these "divisions and errors." They summoned Mr. Elisha Paine, Mr. Solomon Paine, Deacon Marsh, and Mr. Thomas Stevens, leading Separates in Canterbury, Mansfield and Plainfield, to appear before them and give their reasons for withdrawing from the regular churches. Whether the summons was answered by the presence of the gentlemen named we do not know. But the consociation met and recommended the churches of the county to keep the second Tuesday in the following February as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, "to seek the Divine direction in that day of division and error, and to supplicate the pouring out of God's holy spirit upon the people." They then adjourned to the second Tuesday in February, the eleventh, when they met again. The facts in the case, the confession of faith, and the Covenant of the Separates were considered. They decided that the confession of faith was, in general, orthodox, but deficient in respect to the offices, work and mediation of Christ, the nature of saving faith, the institutions and ordinances of the gospel, and the worship of God in church assemblies. The consociation also found that, in all cases where the Separates had deviated from the confessions of faith of the regular churches, they

had marred the sense, or perverted the doctrine of Scripture, so that they had opened the door to the entrance of "Moravian, Antinomian, Anabaptistical, and Quakerish errors: and that under a pretence of congregational discipline, they had set up as absolute an independency as ever was heard of in the church." The consociation was in error here, as the reader will see, when he reads the statement of the Separates themselves, whose church polity was more nearly in accord with modern Congregationalism than the Presbyterial plan of the established churches of Connecticut could possibly be. The consociation also remarked upon the ignorance of the teachers of the Separates, their need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God, and their utter unfitness to expound the Scriptures, and act as officers and teachers in the church. In most cases this contention was just. But the force of it was very much diminished by the successful efforts of the regular churches to put a stop to the schools which the Separates endeavored to establish for the purpose of raising up an educated ministry.

The consociation then proceeded to pass a resolution to the following effect:—First they declared their own adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and that there was no just ground of separation from the regular churches. Then they resolved that the Separates had not taken gospel measures to convince the churches of their alleged errors, before separating from them; that the sepa-

ration had not been effected in a way to promote peace; that they had manifestly departed from the true faith, and from the ordinances of the gospel; that their separation was unchristian, and divisive, rending the visible body of Christ; that the regular churches ought to look upon those who continue in these errors, as scandalous and disorderly, and therefore to withdraw communion from them. This would not, it was added, preclude any church from taking measures to reclaim particular persons, if it should be judged a duty. But the Separate churches were practically disfellowshiped.

Before listening to the statement of the Separates themselves, we will examine the state of the case between the regular churches and those who were disaffected, as it is stated by the following resolutions passed by the General Association in 1744:

Whereas, at all times, but more especially at this time, sundry persons unjustly disaffected to, and prejudiced against either the minister or church, or both, to which they belong, under the influence of such disaffection, withdraw from their worship and communion; and although as yet they are under no censure, yet we think that other ministers and churches receiving such disaffected persons to privileges, serves to encourage and strengthen them, in their unjust disaffection and unreasonable separation; which, to prevent, it may be proper that the minister, by himself, or in conjunction with some of the brethren of such church, from which there is such a separation, to write to the minister or minis-

ters of such churches, to which the aforesaid disaffected members repair for privileges, and in a brotherly and kind manner, represent to them the true state of such members and churches, desiring them to discountenance and prevent such separations. And in case a minister, or ministers, so informed or applied to, shall still receive and encourage such persons, that then the complainant lay the matter before the association to which that minister doth belong, and that the association deal with him as the nature and circumstances of the case doth require. And inasmuch as we judge that such separations, countenanced as above, are the source and origin of much difficulty, and a practice big with many mischiefs, we earnestly recommend the affair to the particular associations, that in this, or some other way, they provide against so great an evil, that it may be, by the divine blessing, soon and easily cured. And that ministers should be very cautious of entertaining such disaffected persons, and of hearing and countenancing their reports of or against their ministers and churches.

That the entering of a minister, or of a number of ministers, into any established parish in this government, and there gathering a church of members, that had before disorderly separated themselves from the church to which they belonged, and some of them actually under ecclesiastical censure, is just matter of offence.

That requiring persons particularly to promise to walk in communion with that church of Christ into which they seek admission, conscientiously attending and upholding the public worship of God in that place, until regularly dismissed therefrom, is not a hard or unreasonable term of communion.

That it is not advisable to admit a person to communion, who refuseth to submit to the above mentioned terms, but insists on liberty to go to other places, when and where he pleaseth, to attend public worship and ordinances.

In the foregoing vote the General Association took direct issue with the Separatists, who held that they had a right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and at such times and in such places as they pleased. They therefore ignored all acts, civil or ecclesiastical, which interfered with this liberty. This, they claimed, was the ground on which the Pilgrims acted, and the only one on which their separation from the Church of England could be justified. But the laws were against them, and were executed, as we shall see, with all their severity. The foregoing plan of discipline adopted by the General Association was intended to force the Separatists back into conformity. But it failed. These people may have been wrong in regarding too lightly their covenant obligations, and wrong in their disorderly method of separation; but otherwise they were as right, in their position and action, as were the Separatists of England. And if the established church of Connecticut was as persistent and severe as the Established Church of England in refusing the rights of conscience to dissenters, the Separatists of Connecticut pursued the only course open to sober consciences. It is not a question whether they were

actuated by misguided enthusiasm and mistaken zeal, but what did their consciences compel them to do? Foolish they may have been, but when we come to consider the treatment which they received, we shall see that self-respecting consciences had no other alternative.

We now come to consider the defendant's statement of the case. October 9, 1745, a Separate church was organized at Mansfield. Its confession of faith may be taken as the Separatists' own declaration of their views upon the questions in debate. We quote the articles bearing upon the points at issue. It will be noticed in reading them that the doctrinal basis does not differ materially from that of other Congregational churches of those times:—

Article 15. We believe we are of that number who were elected of God to eternal life and that Christ did live on earth, die and rise again for us in particular; that he doth now, in virtue of his own merits and satisfaction, make intercession to God for us, and that we are now justified in the sight of God for the sake of Christ, and shall be owned by him at the great and general judgment;—which God hath made us to believe by sending, according to his promise (John 16) the Holy Ghost into our souls, who hath made particular application of the above articles.

18. That all doubting in a believer is sinful, being contrary to the command of God, and hurtful to the soul, and an hindrance to the performance of duty.

20. We believe, by the testimony of Scripture and by our own experience, that true believers, by

virtue of their union to Christ by faith have communion with God, and by the same faith are in Christ united to one another; which is the unity of the Spirit, whereby they are made partakers of each other's gifts and graces, without which union there can be no communion with God, nor with the saints.

21. That whoever presumes to administer or partake of the seals of the covenant of grace without saving faith, are guilty of sacrilege, and are in danger of sealing their own damnation.

This took direct issue with the practices of the established churches under the Half-Way Covenant, by which persons who could lay no claim to experience of renewing and sanctifying grace were admitted at first to the privilege of baptism for their children, and afterwards to the privileges of full church membership. It is difficult to say that the contention of the Separates was wrong. The established churches held that all should be admitted to the church as believers who were not "proved to be otherwise." The Separates contended that the doors of the church should be kept carefully closed against such as could not give satisfying evidence of their piety. And they based this contention upon their belief that saints have certain knowledge of each others' piety. Their position was impregnable. The separation did not take place, as we have said, on account of doctrinal differences. The Separates were as Calvinistic in their beliefs as the established church. The whole difficulty lay in their decided

and just protest against admitting to church privileges unconverted men—a matter about which there would be no controversy now. The consensus of evangelical Christian opinion now would unanimously support the contention of the Separates. The Half-Way Covenant was the ploughshare which was driven through the churches of the eighteenth century, and started the cleavage which divided the churches of the nineteenth century. If their movement had been supported and balanced by education and intelligence of the same high order as the purpose which actuated them, it would have been only second in importance and far-reaching results to the movement of the Separatists of 1608 at Scrooby. It would have done much to prevent the discussions which ended the eighteenth century and resulted in the Unitarian defection in the nineteenth.

The difference in the matter of church order and discipline between the Separates and the established churches was far wider and more radical. As we have seen by quotations from the records of the Preston Separate Church, the Separates regarded the regular churches as "partly Congregational and partly Presbyterial." They themselves claimed to be strictly Congregational, insisting that each church had the right to regulate its own internal affairs; settle its own articles of faith; choose, call and settle its own minister; build its own house of worship, without interference of the civil author-

ities. The twenty-second article of the Confession of Faith adopted by the Separate Church of Mansfield had several sections which related to church order and discipline, viz.:

That true believers, and they only, have a right to give up their children to God in baptism.

That at all times the doors of the church should be carefully kept against such as cannot give a satisfying evidence of the work of God upon their souls, whereby they are united to Christ.

That a number of true believers, being thus essentially and visibly united together, have power to choose and ordain such officers as Christ has appointed in his church, such as bishops, elders and deacons; and by the same power to depose such officers as evidently appear to walk contrary to the Gospel, or fall into any heresy. Yet we believe, in such cases, it is convenient to take advice of neighboring churches of the same constitution.

We believe that all gifts and graces that are bestowed upon any of the members, are to be improved by them for the good of the whole; in order to which there ought to be such a gospel freedom whereby the church may know where every particular gift is, that it may be improved in its proper place and to its right end, for the glory of God and the good of the church.

That every brother that is qualified by God for the same has a right to preach according to the measure of faith, and that the essential qualification for preaching is wrought by the Spirit of God; and that the knowledge of tongues and liberal sciences are not absolutely necessary; yet they are convenient, and will doubtless be profitable if rightly

used; but if brought in to supply the want of the Spirit of God, they prove a snare to those that use them and all that follow them.

It would be difficult to find an association of evangelical ministers to-day who would take issue with this statement of doctrine. They believed that it was the will of God to have a pure Church. This is not saying, by any means, that the Separatists reached their ideal. But their ideal was high, noble and correct.

The church in Canterbury took its stand upon the Cambridge Platform and dissented from the Saybrook Platform as follows:—

From the discipline set up and expressed therein —it appearing to us to be contrary to the authority of Christ set up in his Word, which we look upon as complete and none can pretend to amend or add to it without casting open contempt on Christ and his Holy Spirit. The said Saybrook Platform takes the power from the brethren of the Church and puts an absolute and decisive power in the *Consociation* contrary to Christ, and also has created an Association not warranted by Christ in his word. These things the church looks upon to be anti-Christian, unscriptural, and leading to papal usurpation over the consciences of God's people. Also, there being no half members in Christ, this church covenants to admit none to own the covenant that will not come to full communion, it being inconsistent with the covenant, nor will we admit any to baptism but true believers and their seed.

This declaration of the Canterbury church is a clear and explicit statement of principles common to

all the Separates. It put them into open antagonism to the practices of the churches under the Saybrook Platform. Their Congregationalism was of the primitive order and above challenge. It was nearly that of Robert Browne. Their doctrine of the church and its officers is Scriptural. Their recognition of the fellowship of neighboring churches of the same constitution in advisory councils was sound. Their views of the ministry and of qualifications for it, are worth consideration. They were wide apart from the established churches of Connecticut in this matter of church order, but were in close sympathy with the views which now prevail. For example, Dr. Dexter says, "A true church must be composed of those who believe themselves to be, and publicly profess to be, Christians." This is precisely the contention of the Separates in the articles of faith quoted above. Dr. Dexter also says that "the right and duty of choosing all necessary officers, of admitting, disciplining and dismissing members, and transacting all other appropriate business of a Christian church," are vested in its membership. This is precisely the ground taken by the Separates. The same authority says that while every church is independent of any outward jurisdiction or control, yet when difficulties arise, or important matters are to be decided, as when a pastor is to be settled or dismissed, or a creed is to be adopted, or organic life is to be commenced, "it is proper that the advice of other churches should be

sought and given in council." These are almost the exact words used in the Mansfield articles of faith. In the records of the Preston Separate church are many instances in which a delegate was sent with the pastor to serve neighboring churches upon councils summoned to give advice in important cases. Other comparisons might be made which would show the agreement of the Separates' views of ecclesiastical polity with those which are held by Congregationalists now. They were strict Congregationalists, and were really in advance of their times, in Connecticut, at least.

It would not be far wrong to say that they were, in many respects, the advance-guard of modern Congregationalism. They certainly had something to do with bringing to an end forever the connection between church and state in Connecticut. They flatly refused to be taxed to support the established order, and, as good Congregationalists are bound to do, resented any intermeddling with the internal affairs of the local church, beyond the friendly and fraternal advice of sister churches. Advice they accepted and followed; authority they rejected. They believed in the autonomy of the local church. The ground which they took was that taken by Dr. Nathaniel Emmons, when he declared that a Congregational church is "a pure democracy, which places every member of the church upon a level, and gives him perfect liberty with order," and that the pastor of such a church "stands upon the same

ground as the private brother." They insisted, and rightly, that a Congregational church is self-governed, and, to use the words of Dr. Emmons, that "One church has as much power as another." So the Separate movement was a distinct and radical break with Connecticut Consociationism, which Dr. Emmons asserted "leads to Presbyterianism," and that "to Episcopacy," and that "to Roman Catholicism, and Roman Catholicism is an ultimate fact." Emmons being of Connecticut stock, having been born in East Haddam in 1745, and having graduated from Yale College twenty-two years later, knew the workings of Connecticut Consociationism and its trend. The Separates believed with modern Congregationalists in "the absolute democracy of a Congregational church." The statement of the Preston Separate church, giving reasons for their withdrawal from the regular church, which is quoted in the previous chapter, proves this. Their claim to the title, "Strict Congregationalists," cannot be disputed.

The Separates, as a body, held to the doctrine of infant baptism, with tenacity. But on this question they were divided, many holding to the Baptist faith in this regard, and ultimately leaving the former and joining the latter. In 1753 the church in Preston withdrew fellowship from Samuel Palmer, who had joined during the previous year, because he declared his conviction that "infant baptism was not of God." The church pursued the usual course of discipline, admonished him of his error, and tried in

vain to win him back. Later, after various conferences, he seems to have been restored to fellowship; for in 1757 his name appears among those who were dismissed for differences in doctrine. But he never joined the Baptists, because he opposed close communion.

In 1752 Zerviah Lamb withdrew from the communion of the Separates because she "declared her belief that infant baptism or sprinkling was nothing but a tradition of men." In 1755 Daniel Whipple, who had joined the Preston church in 1751, "asked to be dismissed from the church because it held to the doctrine and practice of infant baptism." Samuel Claslie and his wife held to "what they called believer's baptism, viz.: that baptism was not baptism if administered before faith, and that no religious covenant obligation is any obligation, or ought to be looked upon as binding, if made before conversion and faith; which principles y^e^ church looked upon as corrupt." Failing to reconcile these differences, the church, in 1757, "by a testimonial letter to all the disaffected members," dissolved its covenant relations with them. There were nine who departed and embraced "y^e^ Baptist principles of baptism." The testimonial addressed to these people, who were separating from the Separates of Preston, ends as follows:—

But now Brethren and Sisters, inasmuch as you are gone out from us as afores^d^ we cannot give you fellowship, nor dare we bid you Godspeed (as to

the cause of your going), yet inasmuch as you plead conscience, and we would by no means pretend to govern any man's conscience, for God and his word only are Lord of y^e^ conscience; therefore we leave you to stand or fall to your own master. And we look upon ourselves as discharged from our special watch over you, and the visible covenant relations dissolved between us and you.

This transaction sheds light not only upon the methods of discipline of the Separates, but also their loyalty to the tenets which they held to be essential. For in spite of the defection, the church still consistently followed the practice of infant baptism, and adhered to the method of sprinkling as a Scriptural method of administering the rite. Three hundred and sixty-two children were baptized in the pale of the Preston Separate Church. This may be taken as an example of the views and practice of the whole Separate body.

The Separates and Baptists agreed on all points of doctrine, worship and discipline, save the mode and subjects of Baptism. For a time this was no bar to fellowship. But the agreement was of short duration. The Baptists were unwilling to commune with those whom they considered unbaptized. The Separates, who held the Abrahamic covenant as the foundation of their faith, would not rebaptize those who were sprinkled in infancy. A council was held to reconcile these differences. Certain agreements and concessions were made. But some of the churches refused to ratify the action of their eld-

ers, and what bade fair to be a harmonious union ended in failure. The whole matter came up again at the ordination of Oliver Prentice over the North Stonington Separate church, May 22, 1752. Solomon Paine had assisted at the ordination of Stephen Babcock at Westerly. But at North Stonington Mr. Babcock refused to act with Solomon Paine, because in Mr. Babcock's view, he was not baptized. The next year Paine and Babcock called a general meeting of Separate and Baptist churches to effect a gospel settlement of the differences. "Twenty-four churches in Connecticut, eight in Massachusetts, seven in Rhode Island, and one on Long Island were represented in this notable gathering, May 29, 1754," says Mr. Browning. The convention sat three days. Reconciliation failed. The alliance of Separates and Baptists, as religious bodies, was at an end. Individuals left the former to join the latter. But no church of the former forsook its pedobaptist principles.

Thus the Separate movement was the emphatic protest of sincere and earnest souls against what they believed to be the corrupt practices of the established churches. They doubtless went to extremes. Reactions are liable to. But many of them were men and women who were in advance of their times in spiritual experiences, and in their views of the truth. They could not endure a church order which made no distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate. They began to fight

the battle between justification by faith, and by good works. Their protest against practices which brought spiritual death into the church came none too soon. They were often violent in their speech against those whom they believed to be in error. But they were in dead earnest, and such earnestness is not always cool. They overdid things. But they felt, as a fire burning in their bones, that things were being grossly and notoriously underdone. Nor can it be said that they had no reason for this conviction.

IV

THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND EXTRAVAGANCES

That the Separate movement was attended by great excesses and extravagances, goes without saying. These were a sign of weakness and not of power. They betrayed a total lack of that balance and poise which are essential to give permanency and weight to a movement. Their disposition was to make religion consist in emotions, in outcries, in bodily agitations, in great fears and excessive joys, in zeal and talk. They claimed that the power of godliness lay in such outcries, and that bodily motions were the outward manifestation of the inward spirit, and that where the former were lacking, the latter did not exist. They insisted that to repress these outward tokens was to grieve the Spirit. They also claimed the right denied them by the established churches, to exercise their gifts in public, as the Spirit moved them, whether by praying, exhorting, expounding or preaching, as they felt impressed to do. This was one of the reasons stated by the Preston church for coming out from the established church in town. They preferred to hear their own exhorters rather than the regular ministers, and declared that more souls were converted under the exhortations of the former than under the preaching of

the latter. They even went so far as to affirm that men and women who did not have such experiences as they professed to have, had not been converted. It was declared of such men as Eliphalet Adams of New London, and David Jewett of the North Parish, New London, whose godliness was proverbial throughout the county, that they had never been converted, because they had none of these ecstasies which the Separates declared to be essential to conversion. If they did not feel a minister's preaching, as they expressed it, they declared that he was unconverted; or that he was legal and dead, and did not preach Christ with power. They would hear none of the standing ministers, except "such as they called converted, lively, powerful preachers." By these they meant those preachers who, like Whitefield, were deeply emotional, and aroused corresponding emotions in their hearers. They paid great attention to trances and visions, in which some of them would lie for hours. On coming to themselves they would have wonderful things to relate; declaring that they had seen the future world and that certain persons, if dead, were in heaven or hell; and that certain others, who were still alive, were going to the one place or the other.

Two men were associated with this movement at its inception in New London, whose relation to it was such that they demand special mention. They were Rev. James Davenport of Southold, L. I., and Rev. Timothy Allen of West Haven. The latter

was pastor of the regular church in West Haven. He was an able and zealous preacher. His Calvinism was unimpeachable. But his consociation was displeased with some of his imprudences, as they termed them, and deposed him from the ministry. The immediate cause of this action was that he was alleged to have compared the Bible to an old almanac. But the head and front of his offending was that he had entered actively into the Great Awakening. For he offered ample apology for his unguarded remark, but without avail. What he actually did say was, that "the reading of the Holy Scriptures without the concurring influence and operation of the Holy Spirit will no more convert a sinner than the reading of an old Almanack." Though it was true that no external means would convert a sinner, yet Mr. Allen admitted that the manner of expression was wrong, and so confessed to the consociation. But they refused to listen. His dismission followed. The council which performed this deed boasted that it had blown out one "new light," and that they would blow them all out. He came to New London to take charge of the Separate movement in 1742. For Mr. Hempstead says in his diary, July 10, 1742, "I was at Mr. Miller's with the Rest of the Authority [Mr. Hempstead was justice of the peace] to speak with Mr. Allen, a Suspended minister who is come here from N Haven, West Side and sets up to preach in private houses." This was against the law, but in New London the

Separates obtained the privilege of holding such services from the County Court, and were not molested. Mr. Allen remained about a year in New London. He resided in a house, still standing in 1902, fitted up for the purpose, and known as the Shepherd's Tent. He kept a school for the initiates in the upper part, where young men were trained for the Separate ministry. After a brief service he left town, and ultimately reentered the Congregational ministry, and served the church in Ashford from October, 1757, to January, 1764, and afterwards churches in Massachusetts, until he died in 1806, at the age of over eighty years, and after a ministry of sixty-eight years.

James Davenport, who was the founder of the Separate church in New London, was the great-grandson of the founder of the New Haven colony. He was pastor of a church in Southold, Long Island. Whitefield had been preaching in various places in New England and elsewhere. A profound interest in spiritual things was awakened. Reports of his labors reached the ears of Davenport. He visited the great evangelist, who received him warmly, and afterwards expressed a very high regard for his abilities and personal character. Rev. Andrew Croswell, in a pamphlet prepared in Davenport's defence said, "Mr. Whitefield declared in conversation, that he never knew one keep so close walk with God as Mr. Davenport." Others concurred in this view, as for example, Gilbert Tennent, Parsons of

Lyme, and Owen of Groton. Mr. Owen said that "the idea he had of the apostles themselves scarcely exceeded what he saw in Mr. Davenport." Mr. Croswell said that there was not a minister in all Connecticut, zealously affected in the cause of the kingdom of God, who would not be inclined to receive Mr. Davenport "almost as if he was an angel from heaven."

These extravagant statements do not express the view which a majority of the clergymen of Connecticut held about Mr. Davenport. Mr. Adams of New London, Mr. Fitch of Stonington, Mr. Jewett of the North Parish and others, had reason to hold very different opinions. Yet the fact is that Davenport was a man of piety, of strong religious sentiments, of a good degree of ability and persuasive in his pulpit efforts. During the four or five years of his most erratic conduct, he seemed to be swept off his feet, and to be under the stress of a misguided and unrestrained religious enthusiasm, which bordered closely on insanity, and led him into those excesses for which he afterwards made due acknowledgment.

His strange career began in his own parish of Southold, L. I. He gathered his people together at his lodgings, after his visit to Whitefield, and addressed them for almost twenty-four hours together. It is not unlikely, says Tracy, that those physical conditions had begun, at that time, which temporarily affected his soundness of mind. He believed that

many in his church were unconverted, and set himself up as judge of regenerate and unregenerate character. Accordingly he made distinctions, addressing those whom he considered regenerate, as "brother," and the others as "neighbor." Soon he forbade the "neighbors" to come to the Lord's table. This created no small stir among his people.

Not long after he commenced his itinerancies. July 18, 1741, he came to New London, and held meetings in the meeting-house in the evening. Mr. Joshua Hempstead gives in his diary the following description of the scene at Davenport's first appearance in that place:—

Divers women were terrified and cried out exceedingly. When Mr. Davenport had dismissed the congregation some went out, others stayed. He then went into the broad alley, which was much crowded, and there screamed out, "Come to Christ! Come to Christ! Come away! Come away!" Then he went into the third pew on the women's side and kept there, sometimes singing, sometimes praying; he and companions all taking their turn, and the women fainting and in hysterics. This continued till ten o'clock at night, and then he went off singing through the streets.

Similar scenes were enacted in the North Parish, in Stonington and in Groton. In Stonington it is said that about one hundred were struck under conviction by his first sermon. In Groton, Hempstead tells us that immense audiences waited on his preaching. "About 60 were wounded; many strong men

as well as others." Wherever he went he denounced, as unconverted, not only professing Christians, but clergymen held in high esteem for their piety, such as Mr. Adams of New London, Mr. Eells of Stonington, Mr. Jewett of the North Parish in New London. In Stonington his attacks upon Mr. Eells were so unreasonable that the people were indignant, and his congregations soon left him. Tracy says, "Among those whom he condemned was the venerable Eliphalet Adams of New London, Connecticut, whose faithful labors had been the principal means of preserving the flame of piety in that region from extinction, and under whom there had been a happy revival in 1721, the period of deepest darkness in New England. Here his influence in alienations and divisions is said to have been peculiarly unhappy, though no particulars are given; and the report of the injustice done to a man so extensively known and revered, and the injury done to his people, produced a deep sensation throughout the country." Reference is here made to the defection from Mr. Adams' church which Davenport was instrumental in causing. Particulars will be given when we speak of the constituting of the Separate church in New London. The same year he went to New Haven, in September, and preached in the church of Mr. Noyes, at the latter's invitation, until he called the pastor an unconverted man, when he was excluded from the pulpit.

Mr. Davenport's proceedings were so gross and

disturbing to the peace, that complaint was entered against him to the colonial legislature in May, 1742. After due trial it was decided that "the behavior, conduct and doctrines advanced by the said James Davenport do, and have a natural tendency to, disturb and destroy the peace and order of this government. Yet it further appears to this Assembly, that the said Davenport is under influence of enthusiastical impressions and impulses, and thereby disturbed in the rational faculties of his mind, and therefore to be pitied and compassionated, and not to be treated as otherwise he might be." It was therefore ordered that he be sent home to Southold. On hearing the decision he said, "Though I must go, I hope Christ will not, but will tarry and carry on his work in this government, in spite of all the power and malice of earth and hell." About four o'clock in the afternoon, on the third day of June, a sheriff with two files of men, armed with muskets, conducted him to the banks of the Connecticut in Hartford, and put him on board a vessel whose owner agreed to carry him to his home.

On the 29th of June he was in Boston. Here his conduct soon brought him under censure of the association of ministers in that city, most of whom he had declared to be unconverted. This body drew up a "Declaration with regard to Rev. Mr. James Davenport and his conduct." This was signed by the ministers of Boston, and published on the first of July, 1742. He was consequently excluded from

the pulpits of Boston; whereupon he repaired to the Common, and preached to decreasing audiences. Here and at Copp's Hill the disturbances complained of were repeated. All the time he was in Boston he was in trouble because of his violent eccentricities. Matters came to such a pass that the grand jury took the case up. One of the witnesses testified that he heard Davenport say, "Good Lord, I will not mince the matter any longer with thee; for thou knowest that I know that most of the ministers of the Town of Boston and of the country are unconverted, and are leading their people blindfold to hell." The grand jury set forth in their presentment, August 19, 1742, that:—

One James Davenport of Southold—under pretence of praying, preaching, exhorting, at divers places in the towns of Boston and Dorchester, and at divers times in July last and August current—did—in the hearing of great numbers of the subjects of our Lord the King, maliciously publish, and with loud voice utter and declare many slanderous and railing speeches against the godly and faithful ministers of this province, but more particularly against the ministers of the gospel in the town of Boston aforesaid—viz.: that the greatest part of said ministers were carnal and unconverted men; that they knew nothing of Jesus Christ, and that they were leading their people blindfold, down to hell, and that they were destroying and murdering souls by thousands; the said James Davenport, at the same time, advising their hearers to withdraw from said ministers, and not to hear them preach; by means

whereof, great numbers of people have withdrawn from the public worship of God and the assemblies by law required."

This presentment of the grand jury was sustained by twenty-one out of twenty-three jurors. One of the two who dissented was an ignorant exhorter; the other was a Quaker whose conscience would not let him vote on such matters. The finding of the jury was issued Thursday.

On Saturday, August 21, Mr. Davenport was arrested, and, on refusing offered bail, he was committed for trial. On Tuesday, August 24, he was tried. Several clergymen addressed a note to the court, asking that no severity should be used on their account, but that the matter should be treated with all the leniency consistent with justice and the public peace. The court decided, "that the said James Davenport uttered the words laid in this presentment, except these words, 'that they (viz., the ministers) knew nothing of Jesus Christ;' and that, at the time when he uttered these words, he was *non compos mentis,* and therefore that the said James Davenport is not guilty."

After this he seems to have returned to Southold, and spent the winter of 1742 and 1743 with his people. October 7, 1742, a council met at Southold which severely censured him for his irregular absences from his church. In the latter part of the winter Mr. Hempstead was in Southold, on a visit to his

son, Robert. He went to hear Mr. Davenport preach February 27, 1743, and on that date made this entry in his diary:—

I went to town to hear Mr. Davenport, but it was scarcely worth the hearing,—the praying was without form or Comliness. It was difficult to distinguish between his praying and preaching, for it was all a meer confused medley. he had no text nor Bible visible, no Doctrines, no uses, nor Improvement, nor anything else that was Regular forenoon nor afternoon. and the last Sabbath before by Report was of ye same piece tho not on the same subject. for then it was the hand of the Lord is upon me Over and over many times. then leave off and begin again the Same words verbatim. Now it was (in addition to telling of his own Revelation and others Concerning the Shepherd's Tent [in New London] and other such things) he called the people to sing a new song &c. forevermore 30 or 40 times Immediately following as fast as one word could follow after another 30 or 40 times or more and yn Something else and then over with it again. I can't relate the Inconsistence of it.

This seems to have been at the climax of Mr. Davenport's erratic course. For on Wednesday, the second day of March following he came to New London, and on the next Sabbath, March 6, he organized the Separates who had seceded from Mr. Adams' church into a society. They had held meetings about a year. Davenport said that he had come to deliver a message from God with a view to purify the company of Separates from certain

evils which he declared had crept in among them. He preached one of his fervid, zealous sermons, in which he dwelt with great emphasis upon the need of a pure church. In order to have such a church it would be necessary to destroy and burn every idol of whatever sort. He denounced certain religious books which had been read as spiritual guides, and were regarded as standards of faith, but which he declared contained false and hurtful doctrines. Among the condemned books, says Tracy, "were Beveridge, Flavel, Drs. Increase Mather, Colman, and Sewall, and that fervid revivalist, Jonathan Parsons of Lyme." He called upon those who were to be constituted into a church, to renounce all such idolatry. It was proposed that each, with his idol, whether of books, or jewels, or clothing, should repair to a certain place and make a bonfire of the whole collection, and utterly consume them. The people responded with alacrity, and there were brought to his room, so that he might, by solemn decree, consign them to the flames, a great collection of books, sermons, wigs, cloaks, breeches, hoods, gowns, garments of various sorts, jewels, and similar articles which those who brought them valued. When all was ready they repaired to the place agreed upon. Dr. Hallam, in his Annals of Saint James, identifies the spot as follows: "The wretched scene was exhibited in front of Mr. Christophers', at the head of what is now Hallam Street." The articles brought were thrown together in a pile,

and set on fire and consumed. Mr. Trumbull gives the following account of this strange proceeding:

"In New London they carried it [their enthusiasm] to such a degree, that they made a large fire to burn their books, clothes, ornaments, which they called their idols; and which they now determined to forsake and utterly put away. This imaginary work of piety and self-denial they undertook on the Lord's Day, and brought their clothes, books, necklaces and jewels together in the main street. They began with burning their erroneous books; dropping them one after another into the fire, pronouncing these words, 'If the author of this book died in the same sentiments and faith in which he wrote it, as the smoke of this pile ascends, so the smoke of his torment will ascend forever and ever. Hallelujah. Amen.' But they were prevented from burning their clothes and jewels. John Lee, of Lyme, told them his idols were his wife and children, and that he could not burn them; it would be contrary to the laws of God and man; that it was impossible to destroy idolatry without a change of heart, and of the affection."

This strange constitution of the Separate church in New London seems to have sounded the knell of its early dissolution. Mr. Allen left soon after, and they were unable to agree upon his successor. The burning of books, whose authors were esteemed and noted for piety, was regarded as almost sacrilegious. The strange performance seems to have startled the

"New Lights" themselves, and to have brought them to a more rational mood. From this on they were guided by more sober sense and discretion. Some, at least, of the leaders returned to the church from which they came out. Others joined the Baptists. March 30, 1743, twenty-four days after the bonfire, some of those who took part in the scenes were tried for profanation of the Sabbath, and were fined "five shillings each and the cost of prosecution."

The burning of the books, and other articles, in the middle of Main street in New London, seems to have marked the climax of Mr. Davenport's erratic career; for in the following summer, 1744, he came to himself. In July of that year he published retractions which he sent to Rev. Solomon Williams of Lebanon, Conn., and to Rev. Mr. Prince of Boston, for publication. Mr. Williams said, in a letter accompanying the document, "He is full and free in it, and seems to be deeply sensible of his miscarriages and misconduct in those particulars, and very desirous to do all he possibly can to retrieve the dishonor which he has done to religion, and the injustice to many ministers of the gospel." The "Retractions," are a clear, candid, straightforward acknowledgment of error "in the various particulars in which he had offended." Some of the particulars mentioned were affirming that ministers were unconverted, and advising and causing separations. He adds, "And here I would ask the forgiveness

of those ministers whom I have injured in both these articles." He further deplores, "following impulses or impressions, as a rule of conduct" and "great stiffness in retaining these aforesaid errors a great while." The man was sincere, but unbalanced. Twice he was judged insane. He was a useful man, and, except during the four or five years when he was beside himself, his life was passed in honor and peace.

The scenes just described shed some light upon the tendency of these people to be carried away with enthusiasm. They were influenced more by impressions than by calm and clear views of the truth. Trumbull says, "They laid great weight upon their lively imaginations, or views of an outward Christ, or of Christ without them, whether they had a view of him in heaven, on a throne surrounded by adoring angels, or on a cross, suffering, bleeding, dying, and the like. Some looked on this as a precious, saving discovery of Christ."

Some of their extravagances were of a divisive character, and were carried to hurtful extremes. Dr. Walker says, "Something more than indiscretion characterized utterances whose direct influence was to alienate congregations from their pastors, and to stimulate and encourage whatever was extravagant in the emotions of their hearers." Their preaching was of the hortatory style, and indulged in imagery borrowed from the Bible. It took on a kind of apocalyptic strain, and was calculated to arouse the

emotions; so that there was naturally more or less of excitement in their religious experiences. There can be no doubt about the sincerity of the motives which actuated these people. It was an endeavor to reach a more fervid type of piety. Persuaded, and often too justly, of the secularized character of the churches to which they had belonged, they took the decisive step, separated themselves and formed churches which would represent their own convictions and religious experience. The cry that rang through the eastern part of the colony was, "Come out from among them and be ye separate;" "come out from these dead and corrupted churches; from the abominable tyranny of those unchristian and ungodly Civil Constitutions, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

In keeping with the original motive behind the Separatist movement, they were very strict in their discipline and exercised great caution in admitting members to their fellowship and communion. Here they often overshot the mark. A censorious spirit and mutual criticism, together with extravagance in church discipline sometimes destroyed the peace of their churches. Mr. Hempstead gives the following case which occurred in New London, and illustrates what we mean. February 2, 1743, he made the following entry in his diary:—

Nath. Williams of Stonington lodged here. he went over in the evening to Mr. Hills's alias allen's, at the house that was Samuel Harris's (now the

Shepherd's tent) and there Related his Christian Experiences in order to have their approbation, behold the Quite Contrary, for they upon examination, find him yet in an unconverted estate, and he confesses the justice of their Judgement, and says that he hath judged others Divers times, and altho he is unwilling to believe it, yet like others he is forced to bear it.

The practice of relating one's experience, upon entering the church, which the standing churches, under the Half-Way Covenant, had pretty generally abandoned, the Separates insisted on, and continued, as a necessary safeguard against the admission of unconverted persons into their fellowship. Believing, as they did, that the power of discerning regenerate character was given to the people of God for their habitual guidance and defence, they insisted the more strenuously upon these narrations of experience of renewing grace. Trumbull says, "As to admission of persons to their communion and church discipline, they were as strict as the standing churches, at that time, if not more so. They as much insisted on sanctification and a holy life that men might be saved, as did the standing ministers and churches." The fact is that they were far more strict in these particulars. Indeed, as the incident of Mr. Williams, quoted above, and councils called to adjust quarrels between members who once infallibly knew each other to be saints, show, their strictness in judging often became censoriousness of spirit.

Another of the peculiarities of these people, and

one which robbed their movement of the influence and power which it might have had, was their belief that the guidance of the Holy Spirit superseded the need of "book learning," or careful preparation to preach the Word. The movement, therefore, naturally fell into the hands of ignorant and well-nigh illiterate leaders. Trumbull says, "Because ministers studied their sermons, they called their exercises, preaching out of the head, and declared that they could not be edified by it. They maintained that there was no need of anything more than common learning, to qualify men for the ministry; that if a man had the Spirit of God, it was no matter whether he had any learning at all." The Separates of North Stonington, as we shall see, claimed to have received revelation of things not revealed in the Scriptures. In less than a year, by special revelation, they chose their first minister, ordained him, silenced and cast him out of the church, and gave him over to Satan. When Paul Parke of Preston was ordained, "He was solemnly charged not to premeditate or think beforehand what he should speak to the people; but to speak as the Spirit should give him utterance." Consequently they had a zeal, not tempered with knowledge, which led them off into many extravagances of ignorance.

However, they did, in at least one instance, and probably in others, seek to establish schools for the training of young men for their ministry. The "Shepherd's Tent," in New London, to which refer-

ence has already been made, was both a dwelling for Rev. Timothy Allen during his brief sojourn in New London, and a school for the instruction of Separate preachers. Other similar attempts seem to have been planned, if they were not actually undertaken. But, as we shall see, the legislature, with its customary promptness, put an end to all such plans of the Separates, which looked toward a more liberal education, by an act passed in October, 1742, which forbade the establishment of such schools without permission of the Assembly; which the Assembly was careful not to give.

Nevertheless, some of their teachers were of no mean order, and held their places for many years. Elisha Paine, one of their number, was a man of superior education and sound judgment—qualities which enabled him to be, in some measure, a leader among them, and to control the contending elements. The Windham County Association of ministers examined him, and gave their opinion "that he was qualified, and that it was his duty to preach the Gospel." But he refused to subscribe to the Saybrook Platform, and was therefore debarred by law from preaching. But he preached and was put in jail for doing what the Windham County Association had said he was qualified to do and ought to do. He was looked up to by the Separates as their Moses. After suffering divers persecutions for his faith, he accepted a call to a Separate church at Bridgehampton, L. I., and passed there the evening of his days ministering to their spiritual needs.

Paul Parke was pastor of the Preston Separate church from June 18, 1747 till he died in 1802, and with him the Preston Separate Church; although it continued a struggling existence till 1817. The last entry on its records was made July 27 of that year. Mr. Parke was one of the half-century ministers of Connecticut. John Palmer of Brunswick preached for fifty-eight years. Rev. David Rowland of Plainfield, whose position as pastor of the established church was such as to make him obnoxious to the Separates, said of the minister of the Separate church in that town, Rev. Mr. Stevens, that he was "a very clear and powerful preacher of the gospel." This is unbiased testimony. But these were the exceptions. Ignorance, coupled with the belief that they could judge unerringly of the Christian character of others, led to wrong judgments, which often ended in bitter controversies which councils were called to settle. The peace of God that passeth understanding did not always keep their minds and hearts. Councils called to assist in settling difficulties in local churches are proof that the ideal church, which they hoped to realize when they withdrew from the standing churches, was ever an eluding *ignis fatuus*.

V

THEIR PERSECUTIONS

The peculiar characteristics of the Separates exposed them to persecution. For their views led them to pursue courses which were directly contrary to the laws of the colony. Baptists, Episcopalians and Quakers were allowed the benefit of the Act of Toleration. But the legislature declared that "those commonly called Presbyterians or Congregationalists should not take the benefit of these Acts; and only such persons as had any distinguishing character by which they might be known from Presbyterians or Congregationalists, and from Consociated churches, might expect indulgence." The Separates claimed to be Congregationalists, and were made to feel the keen edge of the law.

Their story is one of opposition, hardship and persecution paralleled, in these later times, only by the persecutions of the Separatists of the early part of the seventeenth century in England. At every point they found themselves confronting a law which had been framed to oppose them, so that they could not make a move without incurring its penalty. We have spoken of their attempt to establish schools in order to supply their churches with an educated ministry. Certainly this was a laudable purpose, and one to be encouraged by the law. If it had been

carried out it probably in time would have eliminated from the movement its fatal element of ignorance. But in 1742 the legislature met this purpose with "An act relating to and for the better regulating schools of learning." It was a blow aimed directly at the efforts of the Separates to provide a certain amount of education for their preachers. It forbade the establishment of such a school or academy for the education of young persons, without permission of the Assembly, under severe penalties; a permission certain not to be granted to the Separates. If such a school were established, the officers were to make inspection and proceed with such scholars and teachers according to the law relating to transient persons. The same act provided that no person who had not graduated at some Protestant college should take the benefit of the laws of government respecting the settlement and estate of ministers. That is, there must be an educated ministry. But the legislature would not allow the Separates to establish schools for that purpose. Their young people were not allowed in the schools sanctioned by the established churches unless they ceased to be Separates. Every effort which they put forth to secure for their preachers even a modicum of education, was headed off by the civil authorities. The only course left open to them was, either to defy the law, or be content with an uneducated ministry.

To the government of the Colony of Connecticut the New Lights were simply outlaws, excluded from

the privileges granted to other dissenting bodies. They were rebels against the standing order. The severest measures were therefore taken against them, and were executed with unsparing vigor; the officers of the law forgetting that they were descended from men who had suffered like persecutions at the hands of another Establishment in England. Both the legislature and the clergy joined hands as had been done more than a hundred years before in England, in efforts to suppress zealous preachers, as if to present the truth directly to men's consciences were a crime. Trumbull says, "Experimental religion, and zeal and engagedness in preaching, and in serving God were termed enthusiasm." And because of the errors which were developed, and because of unreasoning opposition these were called the work of the devil. The clergy persuaded the legislature to brand itinerating, or preaching in other than the appointed places or by any but regularly ordained preachers, or in the parish of another minister without his consent, a misdemeanor, liable to punishment. Men were suspended from the communion of the regular churches, sometimes by vote of the church, often by the act of the minister alone who did not take the trouble to consult the church, because the offending members had been to hear some of the zealous preachers. David Brainerd was expelled from Yale college for the alleged crime of casting reflections on the religious character of his tutor, Chauncey Whittlesey, and for attending a Separate

meeting. Justices of the peace, and other officers of the law, who were known to be "New Lights," or favorable to them, were summarily deprived of their offices. Men of substance and character, who were elected by their townsmen to represent them in the legislature, were refused their seats if it were found that they were connected with the "rebellious" Separates. The clergy excluded from their pulpits men to whom, in ordination, they had given the right hand of fellowship—men sound in doctrine, correct in life, zealous in preaching—because they preferred the Cambridge to the Saybrook Platform. Men were put in prison and kept there because they refused to pay the minister's rate. Often helpless women and children were left in destitute circumstances, with no means of support, because the husband and father had been hurried off to jail to suffer the penalty for failing to pay the minister's rate. Frequently a poor man's only cow, or the winter's supply of food, was taken by the merciless collector, and the family of young children were left to suffer hunger and cold. Elisha Paine, the most educated and cultivated of the Separate preachers, removed to Long Island. On returning, in mid-winter, for his goods and stock, he was seized and put in confinement for months in Windham county jail because he had not paid the rates due the minister of the established church in Canterbury. In Milford, Rev. Samuel Whittlesey was settled over the regular church, against the protest of a large part of the

members. They withdrew, and called themselves Presbyterians. They sent to New Jersey for Rev. Samuel Finley to become their minister. This was against the law. Several times he was arrested and transported from the colony as a vagrant. The character of the man may be judged from the fact that he was afterwards president of Princeton College. For twelve years the people who separated from Mr. Whittlesey's church were compelled to pay rates to him, and for repairs on the meeting-house which they never entered. "The Association of New Haven County took up the matter, and formally resolved that no member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick should be admitted into any of their pulpits, till satisfaction had been made for sending Mr. Finley to preach within their bounds." The principal cause of this summary proceeding against Mr. Finley significantly points out the spiritual state in which the churches of New Haven Association were. It was said that his preaching was "greatly disquieting and disturbed the people." One cannot but call to mind the commotion which Paul's preaching caused at Thessalonica, among the Jews of the established order. The great apostle was hurried out of town as a vagrant. Vigorous, direct, plain preaching is apt to disquiet and disturb people.

The high-handed manner in which the Separates of Canterbury were treated is a most conspicuous illustration of the intolerant, bigoted and unreasonable spirit which then

prevailed in the established churches. But one incident will be cited here. The rest of the story will be told in narrating the organization of the Separate church in that place. Mr. Cleaveland was a man of prominence and note in that town. As a member of the regular church, he opposed the settlement of Mr. Cogswell, in 1744. He, with a majority of the members, withdrew from the old church, and they instituted worship by themselves. Mr. Cleaveland had two sons in Yale College. In 1744, while at home during the summer vacation, the sons most naturally attended divine service with their father. One of the sons, who was a member of the regular church, partook of the Lord's Supper. On their return to college, they were expelled for the crime of attending a Separate meeting with their parents. This was done in accordance with a vote of the legislature in May, 1742. This action was taken November 19, 1744. Three reasons were recited for taking it; all of them based upon the action of the people in Canterbury to which Mr. Cleaveland's sons were not even remotely a party. But because the rector of the College and the tutors judged that Mr. Cogswell was the sufficiently qualified preacher in Canterbury; and because they, the faculty, could see no good reason why the Separates of Canterbury should refuse to hear Mr. Cogswell; and because the faculty judged that no one "in any parish or society have any right or warrant to appoint any house or place

for worship on the Sabbath distinct and separate from and in opposition to the meeting-house, the place appointed by the general assembly, and the parish," therefore it was judged "by the rector and tutors, that the said John and Ebenezer Cleaveland . . . in attending upon the preaching of lay exhorters, as aforesaid, have acted contrary to the rules of the Gospel, and the laws of this Colony, and the college, and that the said Cleavelands shall be publicly admonished for their faults; and if they shall continue to justify themselves, and refuse to make acknowledgement, they shall be expelled." In about a week John Cleaveland presented a reply in which he said that he did not know that he was transgressing any law of God, of the colony, or of the college, and he begged that his ignorance might be accepted as his apology. But this did not suffice. The faculty could see nothing in his apology but justification of his wrong-doing. The law of the college provided "that no scholar upon the Lord's day, or another day, under pretence of religion, shall go to any public or private meeting, not established or allowed by public authority, or approved by the president, under penalty of a fine, confession, public admonition, or otherwise according to the state and demerit of the offence." These young men ought to have known better, if they did not. Therefore they were expelled. If they had not sinned, the people in Canterbury had. The faculty could not make an

example of the people in Canterbury, but they could of the young men.

The expulsion of these students for their alleged offence, created pretty wide and deep indignation. Their treatment was considered partial, severe and unjust. It was believed by a good many that men had a right to worship God in such manner, at such times, and in such places, as they pleased. This was what the Separates stood for. It was for this right that they were persecuted at the instigation of an establishment as iron-handed, as merciless, as narrow and as bigoted and cruel as the Puritans and Pilgrims of the seventeenth century encountered in England.

These people took issue with the state at another point, and stubbornly maintained it till their view gained the day. They denied, and would not submit to the right of the civil authorities to tax them for the support of the churches whose worship they did not attend and whose benefits they did not enjoy. They denied the right of the state to exercise jurisdiction in matters of conscience and of religious convictions. Therefore they did not believe in a State Church, nor in compulsory taxation for the support of any church. In this respect they were far in advance of their times. They stedfastly refused to pay rates for the maintenance of the established churches. In this it must be said that they followed the example of the Separatists of the seventeenth century. And, in the treatment which they

visited upon the Separates of Connecticut, the descendants of those of the seventeenth century imitated the men who persecuted their fathers and drove them out of England.

Because they refused to pay the church rates their property was often seized and sold under the hammer, often ruining families and stripping them of all their worldly estate. In a letter dated May 13, 1752, addressed by some of the Separates to the general assembly of the Colony, they say:

We are of that number who soberly dissent from the Church established by Connecticut and though we have no design to act in contempt of any lawful authority, or to disturb any religious society, but only to worship God according to rules he has given us in his word in that way now called Separation, yet have we suffered the loss of much of our goods, particularly because we could not in conscience pay minister's rates, it appearing to us very contrary to the way that the Lord hath ordained even the present way in which the ministry are maintained—Poor men's estates taken away and sold for less than a quarter of their value, and no overplus returned, as hath been the case of your Honor's poor informers; yea, poor men's cows taken away when they had but one for the support of their families, and the children crying for milk and could get none, because the collector had taken their cow for minister's rates.

Not only so, but when the property was not sufficient, men were seized and cast into prison, where they were compelled to lie for weeks and often

months at a time, while their families were left to suffer. They were not far wrong in saying that it could not have been in the mind of God that the gospel of peace should be supported by methods so cruel, so high-handed and so outrageous. It is said of one of these men that, though abundantly able to pay the tax, he refused, because he insisted that it was wrong, and said that he would rot in jail before he would violate his own conscience and pay the abominated rate. After a time, however, when it seemed that he would rot in jail, because neither he nor the authorities would yield, his wife paid the rate and he was released. The laws enacted and executed to suppress Separatism were, Trumbull tells us, severe and unprecedented. "There were no such laws in any of the other colonies, nor were there in Great Britain."

After much endurance of the severe and unreasonable execution of the law, compelling all Congregationalists to accept the Saybrook Platform and pay rates to support the stated ministry, or suffer the penalty, the Preston church took the lead in addressing the colonial legislature to plead for exemption and redress. The memorial was as follows:—

To the Honourable y^e^ General Assembly of y^e^ Colony of Connecticut to be convened at New Haven In s^d^ Colony on the Second thirsday of October A. D. 1751 the Memorial of John Avery and others the Subscribers hereunto Humbly Shueth that your Memorialists live Some of us within the first, and

some of us within the Second Eccleciastical Societys In the Town of Preston Some few within the Second Society In Groton and Some few within the South Society in Norwich and Some In the Second Society of Stonington, that we are that one of the Very Many Sects of Professors of Christianity that are Commonly Called Separates that we Have truly and Contientiously Desented and Separated from all the Chirches and Religious Societyes within whose limits we live That we are Setteled according to the Present Establishment of this Government, that our Habitations are Generally Compact none of us liveing more than 7 or 8 miles from the Place of our Public worship most of us within Two Miles, that the Number of families Is About forty and the Number of Soules about 300, of which there are more than fifty Church Members all belonging to our Communion and of our Profession that we Have at our own Cost Settled a Minister & bult a Meeting House for Divine worship & have long since been Imbodied Into Church Estate that Nevertheless we are Compelled to pay towards the Support of the Ministry & for the bilding of Meeting Houses In these Societyes from which we have Respectively Sepperated and Desented as aforsesd and for our Neglect to Make Payment of Such Rates we have Many of us been Imprisoned others have had their Estates Torn & sold to the olmost ruining of some familyes wherefore we Intreat the attention of this Honnourable Assembly and Pray Your Honnours to Suffer us to Say that we always have & for the future most Chearfully Shall Contribute our Proportion toards the Support of Civil Government & we not only Prise & value but Humbly Claim and Chalenge our

Rite In the Immunities of the Present Constitution.

Our Religion or Principles are no ways Subversive of Government and we are not only Inclining but Engaging to Support It—and their Is no Difference between us and other Members of the Community but what is Merely Ecclesiastical In which Respect also they Differ one from another & the whole Christian World no less.

Our Religious Sentiments and way of worship No ways affect the State.

We are as Industerous In our business and as Punctual in our Contracts as If we were Anabaptists or Quakers and we Challenge to hold enjoy and Improve what Is our own by the Same Rules and Laws as all other Denominations of Christians Do.

And we Suppose their is (In the nature of things) no Reason we Should maintain & Support any Religion or way of worship but what we our Selves Embrace and Propose to receve the advantage of and that No body has rite to Impede or Hinder us In that way of worship which in our Contienses we think to be Right for us In all matters Civil we are accountible to the State So in all Matters of worship we are accountible to him who Is the object of It. to whom alone we must stand or fall and on these Principles are founded all acts of Toleration. Your Memorialists therefore humbly Intreat the Interposition and Protection of this honnourable Assembly that your honnours would order and Grant that your Memorialists and all such as adhere to or shall be Joined & attend the Publick worship with them may for the future be Released and Exemted from Paying Taxes for the Bulding of Metinghouses or for the Support of the ministry in any of the Societyes from which we have

Sepperated (within the compas of eight miles from the place of Publick worship or Such other Limmits as your honnours Shall See fit) or that your honnours would grant us the Same Ease and Liberty as by law is Provided for the Ease of Anabaptists and Quakers or otherwise Grant Such Relief as in your wisdom you Shall Judge Just and your Memorialists are Ready to Qualify themselves according to the act of Toleration.

And as In Duty Bound Ever Pray.

Dated y^e^ 10th Day of September A. D. 1751.

This document is signed by thirty-three memorialists, eight of whom were descendants of Thomas Park, originally of New London, who was a charter member, and one of the first deacons of the old church in Preston. As we read this document at this distance, no good reason appears why the legislature should not have granted the prayer of the memorialists. By a document dated September 26, 1751, the sheriff was directed to summon the inhabitants of the parishes, or societies named, to appear before the General Assembly at New Haven, "on the Tuesday Next after S^d^ thirsday," to show, if there were any reason, why the prayer of the foregoing memorial should not be granted. He was also directed to put "a tru and attested Copy" of the memorial into the hand of the Clerk of each society named in it. Nothing in the Colonial Records as published shows whether this memorial was presented. If it was it was evidently refused and the relief sought was not obtained.

For the memorialists did not come within the limits of those who might expect indulgence. In Massachusetts, a hundred years before, the Quakers and others suffered for their non-conformity. Now, in Connecticut, the tables were turned. The Quakers and others secured indulgence, while Congregationalists, whose chief sin was that they took the Cambridge rather than the Saybrook Platform, suffered severe persecutions, and felt the sharp edge of the law, and the sharper edge of ecclesiasticism turned against them.

But the Preston Separates had the courage of their convictions. They were not to be discouraged by a single denial. So, January 17, 1753, another effort of like character was made. For the church met to consult "whether we ought not to send to our Cyvil Rulers: to Request them to put an end to the oppression: for it is very Greate and Many Suffer." A meeting of representatives of the various Separate churches was held at Norwich, March 21st of the same year. It was the unanimous opinion that it was "their Duty to Send first to our General Assembly: and if Not Heard to Send to England. Ye Chhs Chose men as overseers to Prepare a Memorial according to what was Purposed to lay before ye assembly Next May: ye overseers were Solomon Paine; Ebenezer Frothingham (Wethersfield:) Jedediah Hyde: Elexander Miller and Paul Parke." A formal memorial was accordingly presented to the legislature of the col-

ony in May, signed by the representatives of more than twenty Separate churches. In it they declared that it was against their consciences "that ministers salaries be dependent on human laws." They further said "we pray for the benefit of the Toleration act: we are imprisoned, our property is taken, from which burdens we pray to be released." Again this most reasonable and just petition was denied. The thumb-screws were given an extra turn. The persecution went on without relenting. The purpose to appeal to the throne was carried out. In June, 1754, Solomon Paine and Ebenezer Frothingham were chosen messengers to go to England and present the memorial at the Court of George II. Paine died in October of that year. The mission was delayed. Another fruitless appeal was made to the General Assembly of the colony. Finally, in 1756, new messengers were appointed who took the appeal for toleration to England and submitted it to the parliamentary "Committee for the Dissenters." The last reference to the matter in the records of the Preston church is the following:

December 29th, 1756. This ch^{h} met by appointment—first heard a Proclamation appointing a fast in those Ch^{hh} that agreed to send to England; a petition for liberty &c. by these agents: Mr. Bliss Willobey, and Mr. Moses Mars—y^{e}. Ch^{h} agreed to keep this day.

But the mission failed in great measure. The committee, to whom the petition was submitted,

expressed great surprise that the sons of the men who had fled from persecution in England should have framed a similar and an equally galling yoke for dissenters from the established church of Connecticut. This was deemed a violation of the charter rights of the colony. It was feared that if the petition were presented to the king, the charter would be withdrawn. The messengers returned, bearing a letter from the chairman of the Parliamentary committee censuring the colonial government. This, together with the disturbance of the French and Indian war, secured a modification of the action of the colonial government, so that the memorialists did not bring a suit for their rights as they were advised to do. A petition for exemption from paying rates to the old society was first accorded to the Separates of South Killingly in 1755. Thenceforward relief was grudgingly granted, until, in 1784, the obnoxious act, making the Saybrook Platform obligatory, was repealed.

But this leniency was too late to save the movement. Its leaders were gone. Its churches were wasted. The people were demoralized. A few churches struggled on and kept their organized life into the nineteenth century. But for the great body of them the end was a bitter defeat. Their sanguine hope for a pure church ended in disappointment. They made a heroic stand for a correct principle. Their battle was fought for what was right. But it soon degenerated into a quarrel with

the tax collector, with the odds all against them. Their conflict deserved a better result, which it would have reached if there had been weightier influences behind it. Their failure by no means proves that their position was wrong. The movement would have reached farther, and accomplished more, if it had been freer from the extravagances which attached to it, like barnacles to a ship, and if it had had a more intelligent leadership.

The Connecticut Separates were not always wise or broad, but they were not the lawless men and women, defiant of law and order, which their treatment might lead us to suppose them to have been. They simply stood for conscientious convictions, for which they could give a reason. They hoped and labored for a pure church. Said Dr. Dutton, of New Haven, their "motive was, to say the least, honorable to their Christian zeal and devotion." Their worship was called irregular. But it was so only because the law, which was a gross violation of human rights, chose to call it so. None of the Connecticut Separates suffered martyrdom like those of a century and a half before in England. But they suffered about everything else. If the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, we may say that the persecution of the Separates, with their simple and free polity, was the germ of that New England Congregationalism which is to-day our pride.

VI

WHERE THEY WERE AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM

The principal scene of this movement was in Connecticut, after about 1741. But before this date there were not wanting evidences of protest against the practice of the Half-Way Covenant in the division of churches over it. The principles of the Separates had been in the air for more than three quarters of a century when the decisive cleavage came.

One of the earliest instances of protest against the practice of the Half-Way Covenant was in Branford in 1665, seventy-five years before the real Separate movement, but which was yet of the same spirit. After the union of the New Haven and Connecticut colonies, under the charter recently obtained from Charles, "Mr. Pierson and almost his whole church and congregation," says Trumbull, "were so displeased that they soon removed into Newark, New Jersey. They carried off the records of the church and town, and after it had been settled about twenty-five years left it almost without inhabitant." No pastor was settled in Branford to take the place of Mr. Pierson for more than twenty years. The reason for this exodus was, that,

in the Connecticut colony, the Half-Way Covenant was approved by the civil authorities, and Mr. Pierson and his people refused to live under such jurisdiction.

About 1667 the church in Windsor became divided over the settlement of a colleague for the pastor, Rev. Mr. Warham, who had become advanced in years. Hot words passed between the contending parties. Matters came to such a pass that permission was given by the legislature to the minority to form a distinct church. Mr. Benjamin Woodbridge was called and settled in 1668. After twelve years Mr. Woodbridge was dismissed by order of the court, and the church was disbanded to unite with the First Church, and thus the breach was healed.

In 1670 the Second Church in Hartford withdrew from the First Church, under the lead of Rev. John Whiting. The cause of the separation was a difference between the views of Rev. Mr. Haynes and Rev. Mr. Whiting as to the question, who are fit subjects for membership in the visible church. Mr. Whiting and his followers were zealous for the strict Congregational way of Hooker and others of the early New England clergy, namely, "that visible saints are the only fit matter, and confederation the only form of a visible church; that a competent number of visible saints, (with their seed) embodied by a particular covenant, are a true, distinct, and entire church; that such a particular church, being organized, or having furnished

itself with those officers which Christ hath appointed, hath all power and privileges of a church belonging to it." The special particulars in which the seceders claimed "all power and privileges of a church," were, in admitting and receiving members, in dealing with offenders and in administering and enjoying within itself "all other ecclesiastical ordinances." They also held to the autonomy of the local church, to the communion of churches, and to the Congregational doctrine of seeking the advice of neighboring churches, "in cases of difficulty." As Mr. Haynes, the junior pastor, and a majority of the First Church of Hartford held to the less strict Congregational way, Mr. Whiting, the senior pastor, and thirty-one members withdrew amicably and formed the Second Church of Hartford. It will be noticed that the principles upon which Mr. Whiting and his followers withdrew from the parent church were similar to those given by the Separates seventy-five years later.

About the same time a controversy over the Half-Way Covenant divided the church in Stratford. It broke out on the occasion of securing a colleague for Rev. Mr. Blackman, the first pastor. A majority of the church and town chose Mr. Israel Chauncey, son of the President of Harvard College, to be their pastor, and he was ordained, says Trumbull, in 1665. A large minority were opposed to his ordination, and they chose Mr. Zechariah Walker as their pastor, who was ordained in the

regular way about 1667 or 1668. Both ministers conducted public services in the same house, at different hours. But it was found that two captains were too many for one ship. All attempts at reconciliation failed. A Second Church at Stratford was organized and maintained till 1672. They were at length excluded from the meeting-house and met for worship in a private dwelling. Finally a new township was granted them, and they were authorized to begin a plantation at Pomperaug, now Woodbury. About 1673 the majority of the new church removed thither and became the First Church of Woodbury. This gave peace to Stratford, and the new church walked in harmony among themselves and with their sister churches.

There may have been other cases of separation for similar reasons in which new churches were formed. But these are the most conspicuous. They did not belong to the Separate movement. For there was, then, no Saybrook Platform, and no established order. Further, these separations were, for the most part, amicably effected. Nor was the separating church compelled to pay taxes for the support of the church which it had left. But these cases show that the principles and spirit of Separation, as we find it in the middle of the eighteenth century, were in the air. And these local instances of division, as it now appears, were a prophecy of the deeper, wider cleft which would split asunder the body of the colonial churches when aroused

and stirred by the mighty power of the Great Awakening.

Elsewhere than in Connecticut, the Separate movement gained a foothold, and its churches were established. But they were largely fruits of the protest of the Separating churches of the colony of Connecticut against the loose practices of the churches of the regular order. Before we study the case at the storm center, let us notice the effects at the outermost edges.

Separate Churches were formed in Rhode Island. In 1724-5, as a result of the labors of Samuel Moody, a celebrated revivalist of York, Maine, the First Congregational Church in Providence was formed. Sixteen persons constituted its membership. Its first pastor was Rev. Josiah Cotton, a lineal descendant of the famous Rev. John Cotton of Boston. For about nineteen years his pastorate was prosperous and happy and his people were united. After the excitement which followed the preaching of Whitefield and others, in the Great Awakening, about 1740-1743, some of his people began to be dissatisfied. They charged him with "not being evangelical enough." They said that he was "an opposer of the work of God's spirit;" probably because he did not enter into the revival with such zeal as it seemed to them to demand. They also declared that he was "a preacher of damnable good works." The church itself they styled "Babylon, Egypt, and Anti-Christ, whom

God would destroy." They furthermore declared that all good men ought "to come out from among them and be separate." This they proceeded to do, and the church was rent in twain. It was so weakened that in about four years Mr. Cotton gave up the vain struggle, resigned his pastorate and left the town. March 7, 1743, the half of Mr. Cotton's church which had seceded were organized into a "Second, or Beneficent Congregational Church of Providence." Punchard says, "This seems to have been what was known in those days as a 'Separate' or 'New Light' Church." They formally adopted the Cambridge Platform, in 1745, by which they signified their entire dissent from the ecclesiastical principles of the Saybrook Platform. They first called Elisha Paine, of Canterbury, Conn., to become their pastor, but he declined the call. In 1745 they gave their approbation to Joseph Snow, Jr., one of their own number, as a preacher. October 20, 1746, they called him to the pastorate. But he was not ordained till February, 1747. He served the church for fifty-seven years. He was a carpenter by trade, and took the lead in erecting a house of worship. It was variously called, "The New Light Meeting House," "The Tenement Church," "Mr. Snow's Meeting House." "Mr. Snow was not a liberally educated man," says Dr. Vose. "He was a man of one book, and that the Bible." But he was a man of deep piety and of great good sense. He was acquainted

with works of theology, was sound in doctrine, and carefully improved his talents and opportunities. He was an earnest preacher, and "had a bodily presence and strength of lungs sufficient to enforce his preaching to the utmost." He died in 1803, aged eighty-nine, after a ministry of nearly fifty-eight years.

Dr. Stiles says of Mr. Snow, in his diary, that he was a private, illiterate brother of Mr. Cotton's church, and that, "in 1746 he headed a large separation which almost broke up that church." The year was 1743 and not 1746. Dr. Stiles also said of Mr. Snow, "He is loud and boisterous, but delivers many sound truths, and pretty well understands the gospel of grace, and is of a sober, serious, exemplary life." "In 1793," says Rev. J. G. Vose, D. D., "Father Snow withdrew from the church over which he had prayerfully watched for half a century." The reason for this withdrawal seems to have been that he did not like the doctrines of his successor, who was more of a Methodist than a Calvinist. Hard words and severe measures followed. Mr. Snow rebuked the church, and the church retaliated by suspending him from the ministry. Efforts toward a settlement of the trouble were unavailing. Mr. Snow, "followed by some faithful friends and most excellent people," withdrew, "calling themselves the true church and taking with them the records, which were Mr. Snow's private property, as no clerk had ever been appointed." Professor

Dexter, in a foot-note on page 114, volume I, of Dr. Stiles' diary, says that "The church thus separated is now represented by the Union Congregational Church," of Providence.

Under date of January 2, 1769, the Beneficent church, of which Mr. Snow was the pastor, passed a vote which points to the method of material support adopted by it in those early days. "The church considered it as the duty of each male member, to give in a proper and honest account of their worldly circumstances unto the said seven brethren," whom the church had chosen for that purpose, "to proportion, according to each member's circumstances and abilities," the amount which each ought to pay for the support of the minister and the poor of the church. This "New Light" church is still, as it always has been, in the ranks of our Congregational churches.

During the ten years between 1740 and 1750, forty-five Congregational churches were formed in Massachusetts. Rev. Joseph S. Clark, D. D., says, "Eight or nine had their origin in this spirit of Separatism; while more than twice as many others originating in the same spirit, grew at length into Baptist churches." Rev. George Leon Walker, D. D., says, "The number of such churches in Massachusetts is uncertain, but the best known among them were those of Attleboro, Rehoboth, Middleboro, Bridgewater, Grafton, Sunderland, Norton, Wrentham, Charlestown and Sturbridge." We

have definite information about part of these Massachusetts Separate churches. The church in Middleborough became divided over the choice of a pastor to succeed the Rev. Peter Thatcher, the third pastor, who died April 22, 1744. The church "voted to hear Mr. Sylvanus Conant four Sabbaths upon probation." The parish committee hired another man to preach in the meeting-house on the same days. The church met in another place till Mr. Conant's probation was ended, when they chose him for pastor and presented their choice to the parish. The parish negatived the choice of the church. However, the latter called a council of five other churches, by whose help Mr. Conant was ordained as its pastor, March 28, 1745. The parish, with "less than a quarter of the church called themselves the standing part of it, and went on and ordained another minister, the next October, and held the old house and ministerial lands, and taxed all the parish for his support."—*Backus.* The church built another meeting-house, and supported their own minister. For several years they were able to get no relief from the legislature. This church seems to have become the First Baptist Church in Middleboro, January 16, 1756, over which the pastor, under the old régime, was installed June 23 of the same year.

In 1749 more than sixty of the members of the Separate church in Sturbridge, including all their officers, were baptized, and espoused the Baptist faith. In 1751 the pastor and others of the Sepa-

rate church in the joining borders of Bridgewater and Middleboro were baptized and became identified with that denomination. About the same time several were immersed in Raynham. In some cases those who had joined the Baptist fold continued to commune with their former pedobaptist brethren, until it was decided that, by such communion, they recognized sprinkling as baptism, which they could not do without violating their own consciences.*

A disposition to criticize ministers was developed among some who were most deeply affected by the Great Revival. In this they were encouraged by Gilbert Tennent, whose speech was not always flavored and sweetened by honey from Hymettus, when he spoke of the clergymen who did not enter heartily into the religious awakening. Sentiments of this kind led to the dismission of Rev. Samuel Mather from the Second, or North Church in Boston in December, 1741. He, with ninety-three members, withdrew and formed a new organization, over which he was installed July 19, 1742. Dr. Joseph S. Clark says that this was the tenth Congregational church in Boston, and that they "built a meeting house on the corner of North Bennett and Hanover Streets." Mr. Mather was accused of vagueness in preaching some of the cardinal doctrines, and with discouraging conversions. The real complaint, however, was Mr. Mather's lack of sympathy with some features of the revival. In

*I am indebted to Backus for these facts.

this case the seceders were not people unduly stirred by religious enthusiasm, but the opposite. However, the Separation was brought about by the same spirit which led the more zealous to come out from the formal, legal and lifeless churches. But in this case it was the other man's ox which was gored. They continued separate worship till Dr. Mather died in 1785. In accordance with his dying request the flock returned to their former fold. In 1744 there was a small secession from the first church in Plymouth, which returned in 1776. Whether these separations were on account of religious scruples, such as often prompted such movements, is not stated. But, as the spirit of separation from the churches of the "standing order" was in the air, it is probable that such was the case. January 3, 1746, nineteen disaffected members of the First Church in Newbury withdrew and formed a separate organization. It is now the First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport. May 22, 1746, "a large secession from the Second Church in Ipswich (now Essex) was effected." But in 1774 they returned to the church which they had left. A similar occurrence took place in 1747 in Woburn, the seceders returning after a few years.

There was not the same persecution in Massachusetts which we find in Connecticut. People were taxed to support the churches of the "standing order." This was not a matter of

choice. Parish despotism was not wanting. But the protests of the Separates finally helped to liberate the churches from this despotism. Religious liberty made great gains. The burdens imposed by the "standing order," by which "all who were not Baptists, or something else known as a distinct denomination," were compelled "to pay taxes for the support of the 'able, learned, Orthodox minister,' whom the major part of the voters had settled over them," were at last removed, in Massachusetts, and all the Separates either became Baptists, or returned to the folds which they had left. The controversies were not so bitter in the Bay Colony, and the Separating brethren were not so widely alienated as in the Connecticut colony, so that the return to the original fold was, in most cases, not so difficult.

There were also a few Separate churches in New Hampshire, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. About 1666 some thirty families emigrated to New Jersey from Milford, in the New Haven colony, and began a Christian plantation. The union of the New Haven and Connecticut colonies was the immediate cause. In New Haven it was held that only church members should be voters; in Hartford the opposite view was held. In New Haven the Half-Way Covenant was repudiated; in Hartford it was practiced. These differences of opinion operated powerfully on the minds of the New Haven Christians. The dissatisfaction was so great that

they preferred to leave the colony and settle again in the wilderness. Accordingly, settlements were made and churches planted in New Jersey, which remained Congregational churches of the strictest sort, until, in most cases, they became Presbyterian.

May 26, 1758, Mr. Elisha Paine, one of the Connecticut Separates, and a leader in the withdrawal of the Canterbury church from the established order, organized the "First Strict Congregational church of Southold," afterwards called Riverhead, L. I. In 1783 Daniel Youngs was ordained pastor of this church by "the Strict Congregational Convention of Connecticut," which seemed to exercise jurisdiction in Long Island. In 1785 Mr. Youngs organized a second Separate church at Riverhead. In November, 1787, the Connecticut convention ordained Rev. Jacob Corwin as its pastor. In October, 1788, the same body ordained Rev. Noah Hallock as an evangelist on Long Island. In September, 1790, Rev. Paul Cuffee, an Indian of the Shinnecock tribe, was ordained as pastor of the Strict Congregational churches at Canoe Place and Poosepetauk, composed mostly of native Indians. This connection of these churches of Long Island with the Strict Congregational churches of Connecticut continued till 1791. August 26 of that year, after much prayer and consideration, it was decided to form "the Long Island Convention of Strict Congregational Churches," separate from, but like the Connecticut body. Revivals blessed these churches,

and large additions were frequently made to them. Nearly two hundred were added to the first Strict Congregational church at Riverhead during the ministry of Rev. Daniel Youngs. In 1839 there were nine churches and five ministers connected with the Long Island Convention, and there was an aggregate of about one thousand members. From Long Island "the movement spread to other places and some churches in New York and New Jersey trace their origin to it." These churches, as we have seen, were organized in 1791, into the "Long Island Convention." Then there was formed a body known as "The Long Island Association of 1836-40." In 1840 it was proposed to form another "ecclesiastical body which should unite in one all the Congregational churches and ministers in the county" of Suffolk. Accordingly, in March, 1840, "The Long Island Consociation" was formed, which "absorbed the two bodies then existing;" that is, the Convention and the Association. This, in 1873, gave place to "The Suffolk Association of Congregational churches and ministers." This accounts for the Separate churches on Long Island, which sprang from the Connecticut convention.

Eastern Connecticut was the principal scene of the events narrated in the preceding chapters, and of the origin of the Separate movement of 1740 to 1750. In a few towns in other parts of the colony, Separate worshiping assemblies were gathered. They were mostly confined, however, to about thirty

towns in New London and Windham Counties. They finally were organized into an ecclesiastical body, known as "The Strict Congregational Convention of Connecticut."

In 1740 there were a few "New Lights" in Tolland who withdrew from the communion of the church. In 1760, Mr. Robert C. Learned says, there were but few of them remaining. There is no evidence that they were formed into a church. There were separations from the regular church in Ashford, but no society was organized. The dissenters joined either the Baptists or neighboring Separate churches. There was also a considerable separation in the second church of Pomfret, now Brooklyn. In 1741-2 a considerable number were added to the church. Among them were some who were eager to exercise their liberty of laboring and exhorting, and who were in full sympathy with the revival. These people went so far in the assertion of their rights, as they termed it, that they destroyed the peace of the church. The matter was taken up for discipline. A meeting of the consociation was called by the church for advice. Ten ministers, with their delegates, met October 10, 1743, in response to the summons of the church, at the house of Rev. Ephraim Avery, the pastor. The separating brethren were invited to appear before them and give their reasons for the course which they had taken. They, however, believing that they had gone in the path of duty, "and not seeing wherein

the constitution of the Consociation was granted by the Word of God, could not in conscience comply." Admonition followed admonition, but to no purpose. The final issue was that fourteen of these brethren, refusing to retract or ask the church for mercy, were publicly excommunicated. Eleven others were tried for persisting in separation, and were formally admonished April 13, 1748. None of them, however, were present to hear the admonition; and when it was carried to their homes some refused to touch it, others cast it into the fire. These Separates were not gathered into a society, but most of them united with the church in Canterbury. Some of the more prominent ones were finally taken back into the fellowship of the regular church. This defection did not seriously affect the strength and prosperity of the Mortlake Parish, as the Second Church of Pomfret was called.

Rev. Jacob Eliot of Goshen had some trouble in his parish with the "New Lights." I am indebted to Rev. John Avery of Norwich for the following facts taken from Mr. Eliot's diary: Mr. Eliot, in April, 1742, speaks of two of his parishioners,—a man and his wife, being "distracted by New Light." And, on a loose scrap of paper, which was probably drawn up about the same time, he gives a somewhat lengthy chapter of *Remarkables in time of New Lights.* In it he speaks of their "remaining in church on the Sabbath, singing and exhorting, after the public service was closed"; of

their being affected with "trances and extraordinary fits, jumping up at full length"; of their pretending to "read in the dark"; of their claiming that "the devil had appeared in Colchester;" of one "Denison's laying his hands upon a man's head and his falling down and lying apparently dead at his feet for a while"; of "a man in Norwich hearing a voice telling him that if he would fall in with these extraordinary things he would be as good a Christian as any of them, and a contrary voice in the other ear not to mind the devil but read I Jn 4: 1"; of "one of his own parishioners telling him audibly before many that he (Mr. Eliot) was an opposer of the work of God, and of the kingdom of Christ, and knew in his own conscience it was so, and that there never was such a pope in the world."

"Mr. Eliot's trouble with the New Lights seems to have been located for the most part in the north part (now Exeter) of his parish, whose inhabitants he habitually speaks of as 'The North Enders.' Here undoubtedly was felt in some degree the influence of Pomeroy of Hebron and Wheelock of Lebanon Crank (now Columbia), both of whom, probably, were about as much inclined to wink at even the unjustifiable proceedings of the New Lights as Eliot was to frown upon them."

In several other communities there were similar cases of the separation of individuals from the regular churches, but not in sufficient numbers to warrant the organization of a church. For example,

take the case of Nathan Cole of Kensington, who afterwards united with the church in Middletown, now the South Congregational Church of that city. In his "Spiritual Travels," he tells how he was deeply moved by the preaching of Mr. Whitefield, to hear whom he traveled all the way from Kensington to Middletown, on horseback, with his wife. He was profoundly moved by the sermon. He speaks of being deeply convicted of sin: "I was loaded with the guilt of sin, I saw I was undone forever," and much more of the same sort. At last he saw light and found a measure of peace, and he cried out,

> "Jesus and I shall never part
> For God is greater than my heart."

Then followed some of those "imprudences and irregularities" of which Trumbull speaks, as having injured the work of the revival, and awakened the opposition of many of the leading regular churches. Nathan Cole tells us that after his conversion he had a vision of "the form of A Gospel Church, and the place where it was settled and Angels hovering over it, saying, the Glory of the town, and strangers that came passing by had the same to say." Then he began to see that the standing churches were not of the gospel order; he saw Ichabod written on the old church of which he had been a member for fourteen or fifteen years, "for they held several things contrary to the gospel," for example, "that unconverted men had a divine right

to come to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and to give themselves up in covenant to the Lord; whereas the Lord says to the wicked, 'what hast those to do to take my covenant into thy mouth.'" This he called lying unto God, "on both sides," that is, by the church, and by those who joined it. He saw but one course open to him and took it, as others had done in other communities. "Then I came out and separated or dissented from them, for I could not see them to be a Gospel Church, or Christ's spouse, Christ's bride, Christ's beloved one, or Christ's garden well enclosed." So he says that he was called on to become as "the offscouring of the Earth, and to lose my own life, as it were, in the world, for my religion." He tells us that the step was hard to take, "was like death to the flesh, but God gave me grace according to my day; and in a little time, he made every bitter thing sweet." The date of his separation from the regular church he gives as follows: "I Nathan Cole Separated from the Saybrook Church in y^e^ year 1747, & kept meetings in my own house on ye Sabbath with a few others, that came to me and sometimes we had preachers come to us." This went on till Friday, June 29, 1764, when he joined "Mr. Frothingham's Congregational Church in Middletown." This, he tells us, at considerable length, he believed to be the Gospel Church of which he had had a vision nearly twenty years before.

This case of Nathan Cole is given as an ex-

ample of very many individual separations from, or protests against, the Saybrook Platform, which never resulted in an organized church. This case also illustrates the sincere spirit of the whole movement; although to some it may seem to have been ill-advised.

Probably the first distinct case of separation took place in New London in 1742. These people, who came out from Mr. Adams' church, at this time, were among the first in the colony to be organized into a Separate society. I have been able to find no definite instance that was earlier. In that case the Separate movement had its beginning in the First Church of Christ, New London. In 1741 there were signs of the approaching event. Mr. Parsons preached for Mr. Adams in June of that year. He said that he found rising jealousies which soon ripened into "open separation." In the following February, David Brainerd preached for Mr. Adams, and found the condition of things in "wild confusion." Matters grew worse till the autumn of 1742. November 29 was communion Sabbath. It was noticed that several of the prominent members of Mr. Adams' church were absent. This was the nucleus of a company of people who met, at first, at each other's houses. They, with others, to the number of about one hundred, associated themselves into a Separate Society, and were qualified by the county court to hold meetings and worship together without molestation. This seems to have been done as

early as July; for Hempstead, who was the legal officer, speaks, in his diary, of going, July 10th, to confer with Mr. Allen about preaching in private houses. Evidently, Mr. Allen, of whom mention has been made in a previous chapter, was on the ground at that time, and Separate meetings were being held. No record exists of the regular organization of a Separate church further than has been stated. But there was a "Separate Society," and a worshiping assembly, who had Mr. Timothy Allen as teacher, and Mr. Jonathan Hill as exhorter, in the year 1742. If a church was regularly organized, it probably was done in connection with the strange scene of burning the books, etc., already described. And it may be said that there is as much evidence, as in most of the cases, that a Separate church was organized here. But it soon disappeared; for Mr. Allen did not remain long after that ebullition of zeal, and the Separate congregation of New London had no leader after he left. Most of those, especially the principal ones, who had separated from the regular church, returned to it. The rest, under the leadership of Nathan Howard, adopted Baptist principles, and joined in forming what is now the First Baptist Church of Waterford, in 1748, and Howard became its pastor, and remained so until his death.

The church in Canterbury became Separate in 1744. This has been called the first Separate church in Connecticut and probably in New England.

This claim does not mean that Separate gatherings for worship were held here first, nor that churches of this order had not been organized elsewhere before this date, but, to quote Miss Larned, that "the church in Canterbury was the first in Connecticut, and perhaps in New England, in which the church as a body, by a large majority, adopted 'New Light' principles." It is quite true, as will be seen, that the Windham County Consociation pronounced judgment against them, and recognized the minority as the church. But this minority never held the original records, which the majority took with them. Undoubtedly, the majority was the church. In this view Ebenezer Frothingham was right when he remonstrated with the worn-out Separates for seeking society privileges, and recalled that glorious day "when the first visible church of Christ in the colony took up Christ's sweet cross," referring to the Canterbury church.

The story of the origin of this Canterbury church is an interesting and a significant one. The regular or established church was organized June 11, 1711. January 27, 1743, the question was raised whether the church would accept the Saybrook Platform, or the Cambridge Platform of 1648. It voted unanimously that the latter "is most agreeable to the former and designed practice of this church (except their having ruling elders or district officers) and most agreeable to the Scriptures." This vote repudiated the authority of the consociation,

and took issue squarely with the vote of the legislature in the following May, which made the Saybrook Platform obligatory upon all Congregationalists or Presbyterians. In 1741 Rev. Mr. Wadsworth was dismissed from the church. He went out under a cloud. The church was left in a low spiritual state. Through the preaching of Mr. Buel, a noted revivalist, a quickened interest was awakened in many. Among them were Elisha and Solomon Paine. As this church had never adopted the Saybrook but the Cambridge Platform, a committee was appointed to enquire into the former constitution of the church and report. The legislation of May, 1742, put a new face on affairs. Matters were in worse confusion. The religious interest divided the town into two parties. The one was bitterly opposed to the revival, and sought, in every possible way, to rob it of its fruits. This party was the minority of the church. The other party was composed of those who had been deeply moved by the revival under Mr. Buel, and were called fanatics, zealots, etc. The leader of the former party was Colonel Dyer. The leader of the latter party was Elisha Paine. Colonel Dyer and his party admitted that the Cambridge Platform was most agreeable to the "former and designed practice" of the church, and so voted, when the committee, appointed to enquire into the matter, so reported. But they bitterly denounced and opposed the evangelistic measures which were favored by Elisha

Paine and his party. As we have seen above, the vote here referred to was taken January 27, 1743.

The crisis came in the matter of calling a pastor to succeed Mr. Wadsworth. The first party, composed of a minority of the church, seventeen of whom were under censure, or had been excommunicated, together with a majority of the society, voted, in 1744, to call Rev. James Cogswell. The majority of the church were not pleased with him, because his preaching seemed to them cold, formal and legal. After hearing him a few Sabbaths they protested against calling him, and refused to hear him preach. However, the climax of the difficulty was not reached, and the separation made final, until an effort at agreement had been made. The minority of the church, led by Colonel Dyer, and the Society, summoned the Consociation of Windham County to their aid. By this act they accepted the authority of the consociation, and declared themselves to be under, and virtually adopted, the Saybrook Platform. Yet only the year before these very persons had voted unanimously, with the church, that they were under the Cambridge Platform. Deacon Backus, Solomon Paine, Obadiah Johnson, and others of the opposite party, —a majority of the church,—were invited to join in laying their difficulties before the consociation. But the church had adopted the Cambridge Platform, and through its special committee had declared that it still stood upon it. They therefore

refused to recognize the authority of a body constituted by the platform, which the church had unanimously repudiated twelve months before. However, they called a council of sister churches to sit in judgment upon their difficulties. Both bodies, the consociation and the council, met December 12, 1743. The former held its sessions in the meeting-house, of which Colonel Dyer's party held the custody of the keys. The Council met at the house of Captain John Wadsworth. After due deliberation both bodies counseled peace, and recommended that either Mr. Lee or Mr. Cogswell be called. Solomon Paine and his party accepted the advice of the council which they had summoned, and attended upon the preaching of Mr. Cogswell for some time. But after hearing him a few Sabbaths they were constrained to renew their opposition to him. Nevertheless, at a meeting held November 27, 1744, the society and the minority of the church, to the number of sixteen, led by Colonel Dyer, voted, as has been said, to call Mr. Cogswell. In this vote, at the suggestion of Colonel Dyer, those who extended the call declared themselves to be under the Saybrook Platform, and so to be under the authority of the consociation.

Those who had called, and were now to settle Mr. Cogswell, declaring themselves to be the First Church in Canterbury, though largely in the minority, and, some of them under its censure, summoned the Consociation of Windham County to

meet for the ordination of Mr. James Cogswell, and to decide between them and the majority, who dissented from the action taken in calling Mr. Cogswell, as to which were entitled to be called the First Church in Canterbury. The consociation met December 26, 1744. They decided "that those who on that day [January 27, 1743] voted themselves Congregational according to the Cambridge Platform, are to be esteemed by that explicit act to have denominated themselves another church, and separated themselves from those who adhered to the Saybrook Regulations," and were therefore "Separators;" that those who called Mr. James Cogswell, November 27, 1744, although they had joined in the vote of January 27, 1743, adopting the Cambridge Platform, were, nevertheless, *"The Church of Canterbury."* The consociation proceeded to ordain Mr. Cogswell against the protest of the large majority of the church, in accordance with a minor vote of the church with a major vote of the society. This act was unconstitutional according to the Platform under which they acted. For that document expressly stated that, in the ordination of a minister, as pastor of a church, there shall be consent of a majority of its members. This is an example of the high-handed measures which were taken, both by the legislature and the leading clergymen, to force the Saybrook Platform upon the churches in Connecticut, and to repress "zealous experimental preachers and people." And yet no act was more

disorderly, according to the Saybrook Platform, than the ordination of Mr. James Cogswell in spite of the protest of a large majority of the church. These, who were declared to be "Separates," "schismatics," and "violaters of the standing order," comprised about fifty families, were largely in the majority, had the records of the church, and therefore its organization. By every law of ecclesiastical procedure the majority who refused to assent to the settlement of Mr. Cogswell were the church. However, the consociation decided against them, proceeded to ordain him and denounce the remonstrants as "Separates." These people, who were really the church, being thus ostracized by the ecclesiastical authority which had the law of the colony behind it, proceeded to hold meetings by themselves, in private houses, and elsewhere, which was contrary to the law. Their exhorters conducted public worship and preached, which was in defiance of the act of May, 1742. Many of them were arrested, fined and imprisoned. In some cases they lay in jail for months, and their families suffered for the necessities of life. The course which they took was in open violation of the statute. But the question arises whether the statute was not unjust and in violation of every man's constitutional right; in open violation even of the charter of the colony itself.

About 1782 this church was reorganized. Its house of worship was removed from where it stood near "the green," and set up in the north part

of the town, where it stood till about 1853. The church became known as "the North Church in Canterbury, Separated Dec. 1744." As such it was received into the communion of the regular Congregational churches. Their first preacher was Solomon Paine, who was settled over it in 1746. Joseph Marshall was the next. His ministry began in April, 1759, five years after the death of Mr. Paine. He was dismissed in 1768. William Bradford and others followed till 1831, when the church had virtually become extinct. Being the majority of the church at the time when the consociation declared them to be Separates, they always affirmed themselves to be the original church. They retained the records, and the communion service. Undoubtedly they were the church. However, the church which ordained Mr. Cogswell remains, while that body which refused assent to his call and ordination is extinct. There were bodies of dissenters in several places before Canterbury. But admitting their claim, as we must, the church in Canterbury was the first to espouse Separate principles as a church.

A Separate Church was organized in Lisbon, which at that time was a portion of Norwich, known as Newent. As to the date of this organization a manuscript history of the church in Lisbon says that it took place soon after the organization of the Separate church in Canterbury, and that it was "made up of disaffected but undismissed

members of this," the regular church. The chronicler adds, "The original Newent church kindly treating and treating with members who unkindly and by breach of covenant had broken out from its fold, so learned why these took the course they did." The reasons alleged for the separation were, to quote further from the chronicler, "want of edification from the church's minister; this church lacked gospel order, as having no ordained ruling elders and no ordained deacons; owned Christ in words, but in deeds denied him; held external professions to be evidences of a gracious state; contained unconverted men; and held in covenant persons not in full communion." January 17, 1746, the regular church proceeded "to riddle these reasons, taking up each separately" and voted, with regard to each, "Not sufficient." It also voted to "call upon them to retract and return to this church with proper reflection on themselves publicly, according to gospel rules, which warning is to be given them publicly by the Pastor after the lecture preparatory to the next sacrament notifying them to appear. The which warning if they refuse to hearken to, the church agree to suspend them from Communion in special ordinances after due warning." Fifteen persons appeared before the society and agreed to pay "this year's rates of those that appear to be sober and conscientous Separates."

But the warning of the church was not heeded.

The Separate society was formed. Jeremiah Tracy, Jr., was called to be the pastor of the seceders, and administered the ordinances to them. A record of the regular church says, "By credible information, Jeremiah Tracy, Jr., has taken upon him to be a preacher, a calling which we don't apprehend God has called him to."

Dr. Stiles in his diary says that Mr. Thomas Denison was called to the office of teacher in this Newent Separate church. As there was some doubt expressed as to his previous (Baptist) ordination, he was reordained by several whom he himself had ordained. Among them was Mr. Hovey of Mansfield. "This," says Dr. Stiles, "was about 1747."

Mr. Bliss Willoughby was called, in 1753, to succeed Jeremiah Tracy, Jr., as pastor of the church. A meeting-house was built which, the chronicler declares, stood "longer than any occasion for using it appeared." It was taken down in 1765, and its timber was used in the construction of a barn which was standing after the nineteenth century began.

When the Separate society was formed "there were not more, or at most scarcely more than a score that Separated from the Newent Church." The same chronicler adds that "most, if not all, who were specially of worth," were won back to the old church. The chronicler continues, "The Separatist church were as sheep without a shepherd. Mr. Willoughby, after supervising them two or three years, and after visiting England as an agent of

Separatists generally had recrossed the ocean and having gone to another denomination, preached at Bennington, Vt." Mr. Amos A. Browning says that nearly all the members of the Newent Separate church emigrated to Bennington, Vermont, where they formed a settlement, "and gathered again as the same church," where they finally became identified with the regular Congregational churches. Of those who remained, "a considerable number of the disbanded [Separate church of Newent] became members of the Brunswick Church." November 19 and 20, 1770, a meeting of the regular church in Newent was held. "Some of those who had been of y^e^ Separate C^hh^ gave an account of their experimental acquaintance with Christ," and "joined in a Solemn Renewal of Covenant and in Receiving and Consenting to the Confession of faith Contained in y^e^ Records of this C^hh^." At this meeting eight "heads of agreement" were unanimously adopted. The chronicler adds, "Those heads accepted as specially needful for this church at that time are in every respect admirable for clear discrimination and manly assertion of civil rights, as well as for decisive application of Christian principle in that Christian spirit which protects the claim of conscience by honoring the claim of God." Among the eight heads of agreement were these, which were a distinct concession to the Separates: "It is not according to the rule of Christ's house to admit any to transact

in the ordinance of baptism, who are not at the same time apparently qualified by the Lord's Supper; nor to bring their children to baptism till they are actually in the communion of the church;" "that it is not expedient nor for the health of this church to compel any by civil power contrary to their minds, to pay anything to the support of the gospel; but that all [should] be left to do it in such voluntary way as they shall think proper." The chronicler adds, "that fourth head was instantly effectual in killing here the halfway covenant." As these points of agreement covered the chief reasons for the original secession, this was the end of the Separate movement in Lisbon.

A Separate church, of thirty male members, was organized in Norwich, at Bean Hill, in 1745. It was made up of persons who seceded from the First Church, of which the Rev. Benjamin Lord was, at the time, pastor. This event seems the more strange for several reasons. Mr. Lord was regarded as a very earnest evangelical preacher. His style of delivery was impressive—of the kind which was supposed to be pleasing to the New Lights. The church had refused to accept the Saybrook Platform, which was so obnoxious to the Separates, so strenuous was the First Church in its hold on independency. When the pastor sought permission to join the New London Association, none of whose members had assented to the Saybrook Platform, the church granted permission, on condition that

the act did not compromise the independency of the church nor imply consent to the New Platform as a mode of discipline. The association, on receiving Mr. Lord, expressly voted that his joining it would not be construed as assent "to the articles of church discipline established by this Colony and as binding him and his church to be governed by them."

But in spite of all this, the "New Lights" were not satisfied. They insisted that, because he had joined the Association, he and his church had forsaken the old platform for the new—the Cambridge for the Saybrook. But the futility of this objection appears from the fact that February 20, 1744-5, the church revoked the permission which they had granted, and protested against their pastor attending meetings of the association in the future; at the same time reaffirming "their attachment to the Platform of the Fathers of 1648, 'not only in respect to doctrine and truth and form of covenant, but in respect of order and exercise of church discipline.' " Here, then, there was no ground for separation, for this vote was taken about the time the "New Lights" withdrew.

But there was another grievance. The church had voted: "Though it is deemed a desirable thing that persons who come into full communion offer some publick relation of their experience; yet we do not judge or hold it a term of communion." Mr. Lord had also declared himself as decidedly averse

"to making a relation of experience a term of communion." The Separates were strenuous upon this point, as necessary to the maintenance of a pure church. This was a radical point of difference. They were not satisfied. Withdrawal was the only course which they saw open before them, and they withdrew.

On February 19, 1744-5 was the first sign or evidence that a separation from Mr. Lord's church had taken place. The leaders in it were Hugh Caulkins and Jedediah Hyde. The first Separate meetings were held in the house of Mr. Caulkins, near Yantic bridge. A committee of the church was appointed to find out the reasons for their withdrawal, and, if possible, bring them back into the church. Thirteen were cited to appear and give the reasons for continued absence from the church and its ordinances, and attending Separate meetings on the Sabbath. Some would not discuss the matter; others frankly gave their reasons. The general reason was, "the gospel better preached elsewhere;" from which it seems that these people dissented from the general esteem in which Mr. Lord was held as a preacher. Jedediah Hyde's objection to the church was, "not making regeneration the only term of communion;" "opening the door too wide, letting in all sorts of persons without giving any evidence of their faith in Christ, and repentance towards God." Here was their strong point of objection, and it was not taken without cause.

Later the reasons given were stated as follows: "Neglect of church discipline," "coldness and want of application in preaching," "the qualifications necessary to church membership," "private brethren being debarred the privilege of exhortion and prayer," "the laws of the state." These reasons were deemed insufficient by the church. The separation was declared to be "uncharitable and unwarrantable; an offence to Christ the Head of the Church, and a disorderly walking." The thirteen offending members were suspended.

The Separate church began, as has been said, at the house of Hugh Caulkins, February 19, 1745. October 30, 1747, Jedediah Hyde was ordained as its pastor. A house of worship was erected at Bean Hill. For reasons, which are nowhere recorded, Mr. Hyde was deposed September 22, 1757. Mr. John Fuller was ordained in his place August 17, 1759, and was succeeded by Mr. Reynolds, who was ordained December 22, 1762. November 8, 1766, he embraced Baptist principles. Under his teachings the church languished and died. Meetings were held, however, till March 15, 1788, when the remnant met as Universalists. This was the end of the Bean Hill Separate church. They suffered the usual persecutions visited upon their kind; imprisonment, distraint of property, and various other penalties inflicted for alleged violations of the law regulating public worship, and providing for the support of the gospel. One of the most noteworthy

cases is that of the widow Elizabeth Backus, who refused to pay the ministerial rates, and was put in jail for thirteen days, till General Jedediah Huntington, her grandson, pledged himself to pay her rates annually for the support of the minister of the regular church.

A letter written by Mrs. Backus to her son, dated at Norwich, November 4, 1752, gives some idea of the temper of these people under their sufferings. It is as follows:

Dear Son:—I have heard something of the trials among you of late, and I was grieved till I had strength to give the case up to God, and leave my burthen there. And now I would tell you something of our trials. Your brother Samuel lay in prison twenty days. October 15, the collector came to our house, and took me away to prison about nine o'clock, in a dark rainy night. Brothers Hill and Sabin were brought there next night. We lay in prison thirteen days, and then were set at liberty, by what means I know not.* Whilst I was there, a great many people came to see me; and some said one thing, and some another. O the innumerable snares and temptations that beset me, more than I ever thought of before! But, O the condescension of Heaven! Though I was bound when I was cast into this furnace, yet was I loosed, and found Jesus in the midst of the furnace with me. O, then I could give up my name, estate, family, life and breath, freely to God. Now the prison looked like a palace to me. I could bless God for all the laughs

*The reason, as stated above, was, in her case, that her grandson agreed to pay her annual rates; apparently without her knowledge.

and scoffs made at me. O the love that flowed out to all mankind. Then I could forgive, as I would desire to be forgiven, and love my neighbor as myself. Deacon Griswold was put in prison the 8th of October, and yesterday old brother Grover, and are in pursuit of others; all which calles for humiliation. This church hath appointed the 13th of November to be spent in prayer and fasting on that account. . . .

These from your loving mother,
ELIZABETH BACKUS.

This letter from this widow of fifty-four years shows what it often cost the Separates to stand by their convictions.

Denison, in his notes on the Baptists in Norwich, and their principles, gives the following account of the final end of the Bean Hill Separate meeting-house: "The meeting house of the Separate Church in Norwich was for a time used for a female academy taught by Dr. Morse, the author of Geographies and Gazeteers; it was afterwards occupied for a time by the Methodists till they entered their chapel in 1834. The house was finally taken down in 1843 to make place for the new school house."

October 9, 1745, the Separates in Mansfield embodied themselves into a church, solemnly covenanting together as such, without letters of dismission from the churches from which they withdrew. Several were under censure, probably for the offence of listening to "New Light" preachers. A brief account of the regular church in Mansfield says, that

"the early part of Dr. Salter's ministry was embarassed and tried by the conduct of some of the members of his church who were the radicals of the memorable revival of 1740. These denounced the Church and Pastor as dead, hypocrites, and devoid of all spiritual religion, and went out from them in a disorderly manner, and formed a separate church. The Church, after bearing with them for a time were constrained to cut them off." The seceders chose Deacon Thomas Marsh to be their pastor. January 6, 1746, was set apart for his ordination, as their teaching elder. A number of ministers of the neighboring churches of the established order, hearing of the proposed ordination, met with a view of discoursing with them, and, if possible, of dissuading them from their purpose. But it was without avail. But Mr. Marsh was not ordained; for the day before that appointed for his ordination he was arrested and put in jail for the crime of preaching without a license. A great company of people gathered on the appointed day. Elisha Paine preached. The ministers of the regular churches were present to protest. Their reception was tumultuous, and their protest vain. The Separates met again in February, 1745-6, to ordain John Hovey, who had meanwhile been chosen as pastor. This service was attended with some difficulty because an ordained person could not be found to perform it. At length they secured the assistance of Thomas Denison, formerly a Baptist elder, who had

recently been ordained by Ebenezer Moulton of Brimfield, and who traced his ministerial succession back to three noted Congregational ministers of Boston. So Mr. Hovey was ordained pastor of the Mansfield Separate church. He continued in office many years. He died October 28, 1775. Deacon Marsh was kept locked securely in Windham County jail until July, when he was released, and the church at once ordained him as colleague of Mr. Hovey. In 1765 the church had wasted so that there were but two men and two women who remained members. These obtained "liberty of communion" with the church in South Killingly, till the Lord should provide for them some other way. Thus the movement in Mansfield came to an end. The Canterbury church retained its original covenant. So the articles of faith of the Mansfield church, twenty-two in number, referred to in a previous chapter, were the first known elaborate and carefully framed statement of doctrine and practice published by the Separate leaders.

The revival in Plainfield, as in other places, resulted in a division of the church. A minority of this body became uneasy at the practice of admitting members without a narration of their experience, and of baptizing children whose parents were not members of the church. Mr. Coit, the pastor, was old and cautious, and unwilling to make changes or concessions. At length the uneasy minority withdrew from the

standing church, and organized as a church on the Cambridge Platform. This was accomplished in 1746. They called, as was the usual custom of the Separates, one of their own number to the ministry, and he was ordained September 11, as appears from a letter missive to the Canterbury church, inviting them to assist at the ordination. The movement, at the start, was very flourishing. It soon became evident that the Separates carried the town. Mr. Coit was aged and infirm and unable to cope with the new and powerful influences which were at work. Mr. Stevens, the "New Light" preacher, though a young man of less than common education was earnest and fervent. Large numbers were attracted to his ministry. The old church and the town roughly set aside the disabled pastor, withdrew his salary, and proceeded to elect a new pastor. The choice finally fell upon Mr. David Rowland of Fairfield, who graduated from Yale in 1743. At first he pleased all parties in town, and he was called July 13, 1747. But on conference with him it was found that he favored the Saybrook Platform. While the majority of the church were pleased, the town, which was controlled by the votes of those in sympathy with the Separates, refused to proceed further with Mr. Rowland, but to look for a new candidate. Finally, however, the friends of Mr. Rowland succeeded in securing a majority at a legally called meeting, and at once proceeded to issue a call to Mr. Rowland, December 3, 1747. The

Separates were thus outgeneraled, and Mr. Rowland was ordained March 15, 1748. It is said that his "ministry was in troublous times on account of the Separate movement." He accepted the call, fully understanding the difficulties of the situation. Mr. Stevens, who was in charge of the Separate church, was, as Mr. Rowland himself testified, a man of native ability. He died November 15, 1755. He was succeeded, in 1758, by Alexander Miller, who came from the church in Voluntown. He ministered, till his death, to the Separates in Plainfield. Both the old church, and that of the "New Lights," were on the wane. In their feeble state there arose in both a desire for a reunion. This desire was accomplished February, 1769, by the settlement of Rev. John Fuller, a Separate preacher, as pastor of the reunited churches, in which office he continued to minister until his death in October, 1777. Thus a happy reunion was effected after a separation of twenty-five years, and a more delightful ending of the Separate movement was reached in Plainfield than can be recorded of many other places.

In South Killingly, as in Plainfield and elsewhere, the great revival gave birth to a Separate movement. The people in this section of the town adopted Separate principles, and were organized into a distinct church. This was in 1746. In December of that year Stephen Spalding was chosen clerk, and in the following February he was chosen

deacon. April 27, 1747, say the records, "John Eaton was also chosen deacon, and Samuel Wadsworth our pastor by vote." Mr. Wadsworth accepted, and "June 3, 1747 was set apart for fasting and prayer, on purpose to ordain our pastor and deacons." His ordination is said to have been of a regular and most satisfactory character. The leading Separate ministers were present. Rev. Matthew Smith of Stonington preached the sermon; Rev. Joseph Snow of Providence gave the charge; Ebenezer Cleaveland of Canterbury gave the right hand of fellowship. Isaac Backus, the historian, and Oliver Prentice of Stonington assisted in the laying on of hands. The exercises were so prolonged that the ordination of deacons was deferred till the following week. Mr. Wadsworth continued in office till he died in 1762. He was followed by Eliphalet Wright who was ordained, says Rev. Robert C. Learned, May 16, 1765. He died August 4, 1784. June 1, 1785, Israel Day was ordained as his successor, and continued in office till his dismissal May 23, 1826, a period of forty-one years. During Mr. Day's ministry he was received into the Windham County Association by a special vote. It was probably during his ministry that the church, after many years as a Separate body, returned to the churches which it had left, and by their vote was received into their fellowship. After Mr. Day left the church it was supplied by various ministers. Rev. Joseph Ayer began preaching March, 1849,

and was installed January, 1851. These Separates were allowed to pursue their own way without molestation, save that they were obliged to pay rates for the support of the established preacher. The church itself has long been feeble and dependent on Home Missionary aid. But it still remains. In 1755 this church appealed to the legislature for relief from taxation for the support of the established churches. Its petition was finally granted. From that time the case of the Separates in Connecticut was not so severe.

A Separate society was also organized in Norwich Farms, now Franklin. Thomas Denison was ordained as its pastor October 29, 1747. He continued in office till about 1759, after which the church does not appear to have existed. Of him it is said that he appeared at various times and places in the history of the Separate churches.

In North Stonington a Separate church of thirty-one members was organized September 11, 1746. Matthew Smith was chosen as pastor, as appears from the records of the church, November 27, 1746. He was ordained December 10, of the same year. August 3, 1749, he was excommunicated by a council. Mr. Smith's own account of the affair furnishes the only known reason for so summary action; which, by the way, was not without its parallel in the history of the Separate churches. He says, "Soon after I was ordained at Stonington I preached to the people from Ephes. II, 22, in a clear line of

gospel truth; all on a sudden I perceived that the church did not give me fellowship." This caused some talk on that day. "We parted in great confusion," continues Mr. Smith, and adds, "We must see eye to eye, or my lips will be forever sealed. The laboring point could not be gained. I took a tour into the country—returned before sacrament day. The church desired me to proceed as usual. I objected and refused. Then the church called a council and charged me with neglect of duty." Yet the church said to the council, "We have nothing against Brother Smith, and so every man went to his tent. After a few Sabbaths my mouth was quite stopped that I could not speak for want of fellowship." Soon after Mr. Smith removed to Mansfield. In about a year the church in North Stonington called a council in the case, and summoned Mr. Smith to appear before it and answer to the charges against him. He says, "I attended it and they had a full hearing of the matters alledged against me. The Moderator turning to me says, there is some accursed thing with you, that you, by your softness, hide from us; and for which I now, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, declare you unworthy to have a standing in his house, and hereby cut you off from all priviledges in the same, and deliver you over to the buffetings of the devil." Another of the council declared that Mr. Smith was not fit "to walk the streets of the New Jerusalem," and therefore cast him out of the same and set him "down in the cold

shades of Antichrist and the dark lanes of Babylon, to be buffeted by the devil, and eat no more of the children's bread." Another said, "As you are now excommunicated by the Holy Ghost you will soon feel and curse like a Devil." And so Mr. Smith's ministry came to an end for reasons which do not appear.

He was succeeded by Oliver Prentice who was ordained May 22, 1753. He died in office October 18, 1755. Nathan Avery followed him, and was ordained April 25, 1759. He continued in office till he died September 7, 1780, after a ministry of over twenty-one years. After a brief interval he was followed by Christopher Avery who was ordained November 29, 1786. He ministered to the church till his death, July 5, 1819, nearly thirty-three years. The Separates continued their organization over eighty years. At the end of that period they so far united with the old society as to build a house of worship for joint occupancy, with certain limitations. In 1824 Rev. Joseph Ayer was employed by both churches to supply their alternate worship. The next step was the reunion of the two churches, March 15, 1827, and thus, after nearly eighty-one years of separation, this Separate church became extinct as an organization.

It may be added here that while there was no Separate church as such in Stonington, there was a new society formed, during Mr. Rossiter's ministry over the First Church, called the East Society.

This new enterprise built a new house of worship, and Mr. Nathaniel Eels was settled as its pastor. At the death of Mr. Rossiter in October, 1762, Mr. Eels was chosen as his successor in the pastorate of the First Church. The East Society gave up their Separate worship and became united with the First Society—a union which still continues.

A Separate church was organized in Lyme, and December 25, 1746, John Fuller was ordained as its pastor. In 1759 he removed to Norwich and became pastor of the Bean Hill Separate church, where he remained but two or three years. He afterwards became pastor of the united church in Plainfield, February, 1769, where he ministered till his death, October, 1777. We have no account of what became of the church at Lyme after he left it.

In the summer of 1746 a very respectable part of the church in Scotland embraced Separate principles, and sought certain liberties from the pastor, Rev. Ebenezer Devotion. He was strongly attached to the Saybrook Platform, and refused their requests, because he deemed them contrary to good order; whereupon, to the number of about twenty, they withdrew from the stated services of the standing order, and held Separate meetings in private houses. January 22, 1746, the offending members were cited to appear before the pastor and the church, and give their reasons for separating for a long time from the ordinances and worship "which God had set up among them." Eight reasons were

given, as follows: that this was not a church of Christ in regular standing; that Mr. Devotion broke a divine rule in signing a paper against Elisha Paine, and reading it to his congregation, and much more; that Mr. Devotion did not preach Christ according to their understanding, and other similar charges; that the church admitted unconverted persons to communion; that Mr. Devotion was not, in their view, a faithful minister, and that the church was anti-Christ; that they did not enjoy Mr. Devotion's preaching, but did Lawyer Paine's and others. Of course the reasons alleged were declared to be insufficient. An admonitory paper was prepared by vote of the church, calling upon the seceders to return, and warning them of their danger. A committee of fifteen was chosen to take this paper to the refractory members, endeavor to convince them of their error, and then read it to them. March 17, 1746, the church declared that, as these persons had withdrawn for insufficient reasons, and had said defamatory things about the church and pastor, for which they ought to be ashamed and make humble acknowledgments, until such time as they manifest their repentance, "this church does by the command of our Lord Jesus, solemnly withdraw from them as disorderly walkers, and renounce communion with them as persons who cause divisions and contentions contrary to doctrines which we have heard and learned—hereby debarring them of all powers to act in church affairs, and depriving them of all right to the special ordinances of the gospel."

These brethren, thus excommunicated, organized as a Separate church in the summer of 1746. There were at first about twenty of them. Their organization was known as "The Brunswick Church." They adopted appropriate articles and confession of faith. In these they declared Christ to be the institutor of his church; the door by which all enter in; the head of the church, which is his spiritual house, and to which he gives laws and ordinances of worship, and which no human power can build or give laws or rules to govern it. They declared their belief that the Scriptures are a perfect rule to walk by, and the only rule of faith and practice in religion. They declared their belief in the Trinity, in foreordination, in general and special providences, in Christ as alone possessing supreme and lordly power in all the churches upon earth of which he is the sole Head. They affirmed that the government rests upon his shoulder, and that his sovereign power is exercised by himself in calling his Church, instituting its ordinances, and giving laws for ordering the ways of his people and his house. The power granted by Christ to his Church is exercised by them in admitting members, choosing and ordaining their own officers, removing them from office and from fellowship. They declared that the ministry of the gospel is to be supported apart from the "civil sword," and without coercion. They also declared their duty and purpose to be obedient to civic magistrates as God's ministers in

civil affairs. These declarations are in keeping with what has been stated in a previous chapter concerning their beliefs.

The Scotland Separate church soon gained a very respectable position, and drew to itself some of the leading members of the parish. Various proceedings were instituted against it by the consociation. But it kept on in its chosen way. If the members were persecuted and imprisoned, this only served to increase their zeal. The only pastor of the church was Mr. John Palmer, who was ordained May 17, 1749, and continued in his charge until his death, August 13, 1807, at the age of eighty-six, and after a pastorate of fifty-eight years. The Separates built a meeting-house southeast of Scotland Village, known as the Brunswick meeting-house. They found no difficulty in supporting preaching by voluntary subscriptions.

Mr. Devotion was never reconciled to this intrusion into his diocese. Every Sunday he was accustomed to send his negro servant with a paper forbidding Mr. Palmer, or any person, to preach in the Brunswick meeting-house that day. This prohibition served only to increase the number of attendants upon the preaching of Mr. Palmer, and fan the spirit of separation and opposition into a brighter flame.

After the death of Mr. Palmer the church wasted away till, in 1813, it was dissolved by a vote of its remaining members, most of whom went to the

church in Canterbury, where part of them lived. The meeting-house stood till 1850, says Rev. Robert C. Learned.

The Preston Separate church, as we have already seen, was organized March 17, 1747. Their reasons for separating from the regular church, their statement of principles, their memorials to the legislature, praying for legal recognition and right to hold meetings, and for exemption from taxation to support the regular Congregational churches within whose parishes the memorialists lived, and the part it acted in appealing to the crown for relief, have been stated in a previous chapter. It remains to add a word about its origin and final disappearance. A separation from the church in Preston City had taken place prior to March 14, 1744, but it did not issue in an organized church till three years later. December 11, 1745, a meeting of the regular church was held. Rev. Hezekiah Lord of Griswold was present by vote of the church to assist in the deliberations. The question was whether the church should proceed to discipline "such members as offenders who separated from the communion of it in special ordinances, and attended a separate assembly on Lord's days, while Rev. Mr. Treat was pastor and continued to do so since: Voted in the affirmative." Accordingly the Separating brethren were summoned to appear at a church meeting to be held May 18, 1746. Twenty-three men and women were cited. Evi-

dently they were dismissed, if not excommunicated; for their names appear on the roll of the Separate church among its charter members.

June 18, 1747, the "church manifested their evidence" that Paul Park was chosen to the pastoral office. He was ordained July 15, 1747. Trumbull says that when he was ordained "it was enjoined upon him, by no means to study or premeditate what he should say in public, but to speak as the Spirit should give him utterance." This church, like all the Separate churches, followed the Cambridge Platform, "with some alterations and amendments." Mr. Park continued in office and kept the records of the church till he died June 25, 1802, in the eighty-second year of his age, and the fifty-fifth of his ministry. With his death the church, which he had served so long, practically died. Meetings which had become irregular during his last days, became more so after he was gone. Occasionally, Elder Christopher Avery, or Deacon Amos Avery, or some other preacher, would hold services in the old meeting-house, or in the neighborhood. After February, 1801, only two members were received in 1806, and three in 1807. An effort was made to revive the church in 1815. Twelve new members were received. Benjamin F. Park was chosen clerk, and Amasa Standish deacon. It was voted to ordain Amos Avery as their minister. He was an aged man; and the ceremony seems never to have occurred. By July 27, 1817, the date of the last

entry in the records, the church seems to have become extinct. Of the families who had worshiped at the Separate church, some returned to the regular church at Preston City, some became Methodists, some baptists and some Universalists.

Elder Park preached a half-century sermon in 1797. It is said that large audiences gathered to hear him. It is also said that several Sundays were occupied in the delivery. This can easily be believed; for the experiences through which he, in common with the other Separates, passed, must have afforded material too abundant to be disposed of in one or even two discourses. It was the early custom of the church to ordain their deacons. The record of the ordination of Elisha Fitch in 1765, found upon the book of the church, illustrates its early practice. "Mr. Fuller of Norwich preached a sermon on the occasion; then the church by their vote filled up their presbytery by adding Mr. Fuller and Deacon Avery; then proceeded: Deacon Avery made the first prayer, our pastor gave the charge, and Mr. Fuller the last [prayer]; the young deacon read a psalm; we sang and dismissed." As this was one of the leading Separate churches, this event may be taken to represent the custom which usually prevailed on such occasions. It is certain that with them the church, composed of redeemed persons, was the final authority. This ordination of Deacon Fitch reads like an echo from the sixth chapter of the Acts. Elder Park was a descendant

of Thomas Park, the first deacon of the church at Preston City.

A small Separate society was gathered in the southeastern part of the North Parish, New London, now Montville, in 1747, during the ministry of Rev. David Jewett. Like some other of the "New Lights," they held the doctrine of baptism by immersion, but were opposed to close communion. Their first leader was Dyer Hyde. He succeeded in drawing away many from the regular Congregational churches to which they belonged. May 17, 1750, Joshua Morse, a resident of the North Parish, was ordained their elder. They erected a house of worship which outlasted their organization. They kept together about thirty years. In 1779 Elder Morse removed to Sandisfield, Massachusetts, and the church which he had kept together so long, soon ceased to exist. Out of the remnant of it was organized, in 1788, what came to be known as the Palmer Baptist church.

There was a secession from the First Society of Windham about 1747. If organized at all, it did not have a long life. Backus, the historian, says that Elihu Morse, (Elisha Marsh, says Miss Larned, who is probably right,) was ordained there October 7, 1747, and that he afterwards became a Baptist. Probably this ended whatever there had been at Windham as a Separate society. The Baptist fold proved a convenient and an agreeable refuge for many Separates on the breaking up of their own churches.

What is now the South Congregational Church in Middletown, Conn., was organized at Wethersfield, January 7, 1747. It was formed, says the pastor, Rev. Frederick W. Green, "as a Separatist, or as they preferred to be called, Strict Congregational church." Like almost every Separate church, it grew out of the Great Awakening. Mr. Green traces its origin back directly to the preaching of Whitefield on the South Green in Middletown, during his first visit in New England. Its original members came from towns "all the way from Suffield on the north, to Middletown on the south." There were a number of towns along the Connecticut River, where the "fire of Separatism" seemed to burn, where the Saybrook Platform, and its Semi-Presbyterianism, and the Half-Way Covenant were repudiated, and where a consecrated, rather than educated ministry, was emphasized.

This church, which was formed at Wethersfield, seems not to have been an offshoot from any other church, but an independent movement, with a membership scattered up and down the Connecticut River. Yet several, if not all, of the original members, twenty or thirty in number, separated from the established churches in the towns where they lived. It seems to have been gathered at the first in the house of Mr. Ebenezer Frothingham, who was a leading spirit in the movement, and who was ordained, by the church itself, as its first pastor, October 28, 1747. The spirit which animated these

people was as old, they believed, as the prophets, apostles and martyrs. Nathan Cole said, "Why, look in the Bible, and you will find that all the prophets of the Old Testament and all the apostles in the New Testament and even Christ himself, the Son of God, with the martyrs, were all Separatists." Frothingham, the first pastor of the Middletown church, states the case in his book, "The Key of Knowledge," as follows: "The main thing which I have in view . . . is free liberty of conscience, the right of thinking, choosing and acting for oneself in the matters of religion, which respect God and conscience, and to contend for this important privilege, I nor any other person should not be ashamed to do."

The South Church in Middletown thus had its beginnings in Strict Congregational methods; methods which were quite in keeping with the usages of the present. Of the early years in Wethersfield little is recorded. It is not known whether or not the law compelling them to pay for the support of the regular church was so rigidly enforced that they could not endure it. "But for some reasons," says Mr. Green, "several of the leading brethren moved to New York, and at the end of about seven years' struggle with the authorities it was thought best to remove Mr. Frothingham's home, and with it the seat of his ministry to Middletown, and here he was re-installed over them in 1754." This location may have been chosen because there were more members

of the church in Middletown, and because the opposition of the town and church was not so violent as in Wethersfield. During the first part of Mr. Frothingham's ministry in Middletown, the church still worshiped in his house. His pastorate continued forty-five years. He, like Solomon Paine of Canterbury, stood high in the esteem of the churches of the Separation.

Although it started out as a Separate church, it is to-day one of the leading churches of the Congregational order. Rev. Robert C. Learned says that it was reorganized in 1816. The only churches still remaining which were organized as Separate bodies are the church in South Killingly, the church in Torrington, according to Dr. McEwen, the Beneficent Church, Providence, R. I., and the South Congregational Church, Middletown. Of the last the pastor says, "Which still in its financial and corporate capacity is known as the *Strict Congregational Society* of Middletown." Dr. George Leon Walker, speaking of the final issue of the Separate movement says, "Some of them returned to communion with the churches from which they came out. A few of them—like the Second Church in Middletown, Connecticut, which still retains the name of 'The Church in the Strict Congregational Society'—developed into strong churches in connection with the general Congregational fellowship. A few passed over into the Baptist communion." The remainder died. It may also be added here, that these churches

preserved pure and simple Congregationalism, and rescued it from the Presbyterianizing tendency of such documents as the Saybrook Platform. If for nothing else, modern Congregational churches owe them a debt of gratitude for keeping alive their historic polity, in the midst of ecclesiastical influences setting strongly toward central authority, and away from the strict autonomy of the local church.

Mr. Joshua Hempstead says in his diary that a Separate church was formed in East Lyme, over which Ebenezer Mack was ordained as pastor, January 12, 1749. They erected a house of worship in 1755. Mr. Mack and a majority of his church became Baptists, and were received into fellowship with other churches of that order, although they continued the practice of open communion until 1795. This was the origin of what is now known as the First Baptist Church of East Lyme.

April 18, 1750, Joseph Hastings was ordained pastor of a Separate church which was then organized in Suffield. They built a house of worship in 1762. The church soon became divided. Mr. Hastings became a Baptist, and, in 1769, pastor of the Baptist church in Suffield, into which a portion of his Separate church had been organized. The remainder of the Separates then chose Mr. Israel Holley as their pastor, and he was ordained in that office, June 29, 1763. He was afterwards dismissed, and preached in Granby and Cornwall. This church came to an end about 1784. The members

who had not already become Baptists, returned to the old church.

A Separate Society seems to have been formed in Colchester. Jabez Jones was ordained as its pastor. It is probable that this separation was due to the refusal of Mr. Little, the pastor of the regular church in Colchester, to allow Mr. Pomeroy of Hebron, a neighboring town, to preach in his church. A lecture had been appointed for Mr. Pomeroy, apparently with Mr. Little's consent. Supposing that he was going to the aid of a brother minister, Mr. Pomeroy set out from home. For some reason Mr. Little forbade his going into the meeting-house. A large congregation had assembled. Mr. Pomeroy conceived it to be his duty to address them, thinking that some might be reached and saved. Accordingly he retired a little from the meeting-house and preached to a large and attentive company. Complaint was made against him for preaching contrary to the law, and for seven years he was deprived of his stated salary. It is not certain that this was the beginning of causes which operated to bring about the organization of a Separate church at Colchester. But it might have been. At any rate, it was one of many like instances, showing the utter lack of religious liberty in Connecticut, from 1742 to 1784, which frequently did result in such protests as separation from the churches of the standing order.

The date of the formation of the Separate church

in Enfield is not certain. But there are evidences which seem to point to its existence as early as 1751. The causes which led to separations from the established churches elsewhere, were operative in Enfield as early as that year. There is, therefore, reason to believe that the separation took place then. The evidence which seems to establish this date, 1751, beyond a reasonable question, is furnished by correspondence, recently discovered, between the Separate church in Enfield and the Separate church in Canterbury. Five letters were written from Enfield. The first bears date of "November 28, Anno 1751". It begins "to the Church of Christ at Canterbury (greeten) Beloved in the Lord for help I wright to you by an agreement with the Church in Enfield." The letter goes on to state the difficulties in whose adjustment the assistance of the church in Canterbury is sought. It says, "There is the mystery of enecyty Got into this Church where as if it is not Searched out it will Destroy this body of Saints as a Church here." It is signed by Joseph Markham. The meeting was to take place December 18. Two days later, "Solomon paine, paster of the Church of Christ at Canterbury, and thomas Stevens paster of the Church of Christ at plainfield" gave their decision on the case in question. It was addressed "to the Church at Enfield, greeting wishing grase, &c." It was signed by Solomon Paine and Thomas Stevens. Three other letters of a similar character show, not only that the

Separate church in Enfield was in existence as early as 1751, but also that it was seriously rent by internal dissensions, and that the dream of the Separates for a pure church was as yet far from realization.

Nathaniel Collins was the first pastor of this church. He was a son of Rev. Nathaniel Collins who, in 1699, had become pastor of the regular church in Enfield. The oldest formal document of this church bears date of April 13, 1762. A meeting was held "on that day at the house of the Widow Abigail Markham in order to consult matters relative to the Glorious Redeemers vizable Kingdom and interest in the world." A considerable number were granted permission "to Renew and come into Covenant with God and one with another." This meeting was adjourned to April 27 to consider other matters affecting the church. One was as follows: "Some consideration Pas^{d} between the church and Assembly and our brother Nath^{l} Collins of Westfield who was then present for that Purpose by our Desire Relative to his Coming and settling with us and Improving his gifts as god shall inable him." On the 10th of May following, "the church on their Part Plumptly Desired him to come to their help as above mentioned and he on his Part manifested Resignation to the Will of God in that Respect." August 20 the church was again assembled to adjust certain difficulties; it seemed to be in hot water most of the time. At that time Mr. Collins "made a gospel Dedication of him selfe to us

as on his part Ready to Comply with that Call Which Seamed so Evidently from God and Man." At the same meeting a declaration was made which reads like a statement of doctrine. Probably this is the date of the beginning of Mr. Collins' ministry. The statement by the church, or renewal of their covenant, is as follows:—

We do now as in the Presence of the Great Eternal Omnicient god who Knows the Secrets of all hearts and in the presence of angels and men acknowledge our Selves to be under the most Solemn Covenant with the Lord to be for him and no other and we Do now Renew our Covenant with him.

1. We take the one only Living and True god to be our god one God in three Persons the father— Son and holy Ghost.

2. we take the Holy Scriptures old and New Testament to be the Revelᵈ mind and will of god and promise Through the helpe of the holy Spirit to make them the Rule of oure Life acknowledging ourselves by Nature children of wrath and oure hope of mercy with god is only through the Riteousness of Jesus Christ apprehended by Faith.

3. We now Call Heaven and Earth to Witness that without ye last reserve we Doo give up oure Selves Soule and Body and all that we have and are to one god through Jesus Christ to be Entirely at his Disposal both oure Selves oure Names and Estates as god shall See most for his own glory and that we will Doo Faithfully by the help of gods Spirit what So ever our Conscience Influenced by the word and Spirit of God Directs us to be Duty though it be Never so Contrary to Nature both as to Duties to

god and man, and we do also by the assistance of Divine grace unitedly give up oure Selves one to another in Covenant promising by the Help of gods grace to act Towards one another as Brethren in Christ watching over one another in ye Love of god and espicially to watch against all Jesting Lightness and foolish Talking which is not Convenient and everything that Does not Become the Followers of the holy Lamb of god and to Seek ye good of each other and of the Church universal for the glory of God and to hold Communion together in the Worship of god and in the ordinances and Discipline of Christ in this Church of God According to Christ's visible . . . [not legible]. And submitting oure selves to the Discipline of Christ in this Church as part of his mystical body according as we shall be guided by the word and spirit of god, and by help of Divine grace Still to be looking for more light from god which is contained in the sacred scriptures beleaving that their is greater mysteries to be solved and further Light to Shine in ye Church beyond what they have ever yet attained to. Looking and watching for the glorious Day when the Lord Jesus will Take to himself his great power and Reign from Sea to Sea and from ye rivers to ye ends of the Earth and this Covenant we make with the free and full consent of our soules Beleaving [not legible] ratified in heaven before the throne of god and the Lamb.

Even so come Lord Jesus Amen and Amen. Neh. 9-38—and chap 10-28-29, 2d Chron. 15-12 Isa. 5-5."

This remarkable document is signed by fifty persons, male and female, with the name of Nathaniel

Collins, who was henceforth the pastor, at the head of the column. This is the earliest known paper in existence which points directly to the organization of a Separate church in Enfield. But as it was declared to be a renewal of "our Covenant with him," it clearly points to an organization already effected, and justifies the view already stated that the church had been in existence since 1751. It seems reasonable also to infer that this restatement of faith, and renewal of Covenant, was made August 20, 1762, upon the occasion of the church's taking to itself Mr. Collins as pastor.

As a statement of belief it sheds additional light upon the views held by the Separates of Connecticut. As far as it goes its orthodoxy cannot be questioned. Its Trinitarianism is pronounced. Its belief in the Word of God as a rule of faith and practice is unequivocal. The covenant promises all that could be asked. The difficulty was, as appears from frequent councils called to settle disputes, they did not live up to it. These internal dissensions, by which this church was torn, hastened its decline.

Seven years after the above reorganization the Enfield Separates petitioned the legislature for relief from taxation to support the established church, and for legal right to exist as a religious society. The memorial was granted in May, 1770, and so, after more than twenty years of existence the Separates of Enfield had legal status as The Second Society of Enfield. The memorial was opposed by the First

Society; but in vain. The legislature had already granted a similar memorial of the church in South Killingly, and adopted a more liberal policy towards those who dissented from the established order.

Eighty names were affixed to the memorial, showing a considerable growth within the seven years since the reorganization referred to. But their trials as to the support of the gospel were not at an end. It was easier to promise than to pay. The Separates were not so very unlike other Christians. So they, like other churches, had to have meetings and they chose committees "to Treat with those Persons that Refuse to pay their Respective Sums," or "to Collect the Nessessaries of Life for the Rev^{d} Mr. Collins." This was as late as 1777. The theory of a gospel supported by the free gifts of the people was one thing; to get these gifts was quite another thing. And the Separates were, some of them, at least, compelled to resort to the very methods against which they had protested. At any rate, they found that absolutely free-will offerings did not meet the necessities of the case. After making proper allowance for the financial straits which were due to commercial and other disturbances of the Revolutionary War, it is evident from the records of the church, as Dr. Means well remarks, "that the members of this (the Enfield) church had not attained to their own professed ideal—that the maintenance of a church should be voluntary. Their theory in this respect was in advance of their time,

while their practice failed to exemplify their theory."

As we have seen, the First Parish opposed granting the memorial of the Separates. One Peter Reynolds was chosen to represent it "at the Assembly to Defend against said petition." But not only was the second, or Separate, Society legalized by act of the legislature; also a portion of the land originally set apart for the support of the ministry in Enfield was taken from the first society and given to this. Naturally there was more or less of friction, but the relations between the two churches were as friendly as could have been expected under the circumstances.

The first meeting of the new society after the legislature had granted it legal existence, was held November 22, 1770. But the future was not all smooth. Social problems perplexed them as well as other churches. There were the petty jealousies which arose from the "common practice of assigning seats in the meeting house in accordance with the supposed rank or worth of the Congregation." As was the custom in other churches, the duty of "seating the meeting house" was assigned to a committee.

How long Mr. Collins served as the pastor of the Enfield Separate church we do not know. There are no explicit records concerning the settlement of ministers to succeed him. There were others, of whom Rev. George Atwell was one. It is likely

that there were intervals of considerable duration when the church had no pastor. The one bond which held them together was "their common feeling of opposition to the First Church." That such was their bond of fellowship is demonstrated by the fact that, when all reason for further hostility was removed through their own legal incorporation as a church, then radical elements of discord and disruption appeared among themselves—elements which ended in the extinction of the church.

From this Separate church a number withdrew, who joined the Shaker Community which was being formed in 1786. Joseph Markham, who seems to have been a disturbing factor among the Separates, was among those who withdrew. The remaining members of the church lived a checkered life. Disputes and divisions destroyed their spirituality and very materially weakened the force of the church. After a varied life of over fifty years this Separate Society of Enfield merged into a Baptist church in 1806. Some of the original Separates moved from town; others died. Five men who signed the memorial of 1769 returned to the church from which they had gone out more than thirty years before. In 1806 the land and church and parsonage of the Separates became the property of the Baptists. In 1842, when the Baptist society ceased to exist, the property passed into the hands "of what is now known as the Adventist Society of Enfield." Thus

ended this chapter in the story of the Separate movement in Enfield.*

April 15, 1751, Alexander Miller was ordained over the Separate church in Voluntown. He ministered to it till his removal to Plainfield about 1758, when its members returned to the church which they had left. This united church is known as "the church in Voluntown and Sterling."

In North Groton, now Ledyard, there was a small body of Separates. At what time the society was gathered we do not definitely know. But Rev. Mr. Tuttle, in a sermon preached on the forty-eighth anniversary of his settlement in Ledyard, says it was probably sometime between 1742 and 1748. Nathaniel Brown, Jr., probably a native of the town, was ordained as pastor of the church, November 14, 1751, and held the office about four years. His successor was Park Allyn, who was born in Ledyard in 1733. Mr. Tuttle says, "Elder Allyn was, by a council, deposed from the ministry on account of alleged immorality, and his church was left to be scattered. Some of the members were living when I came (in 1811) to this place, and a few of them united with this church after it was formed." Rev.

*I am indebted for the principal facts relative to the Separate church in Enfield to Dr. Oliver William Means, pastor of the First Church in Enfield, whose "sketch of the Strict Congregational Church in Enfield" gives the complete story of the movement from 1751 to 1842, and is a valuable contribution to the ecclesiastical history of Connecticut. It is published by the Hartford Seminary Press, and the reader is referred to it for details which could not be given here.

John Avery says, "The Separate church edifice stood about a mile west of the Congregational. It was removed to Gales Ferry in 1803; and for more than fifty years, standing where the Methodist church now stands, was occupied by the Methodist people as their place of worship. The old church edifice, which was about as large, I think, as an old-time country schoolhouse, was standing at Gales Ferry and used as a barn several years after I began my ministry in Ledyard," in 1881.

Mr. Allyn died, February 13, 1804. After he was deposed the church does not seem to have had any pastor, or even stated supply. It kept along for some time, probably till about 1811. But just how long its organization continued we do not know; for if it ever had any records, they have not come down to us. It is likely that neighboring Separate ministers preached for it occasionally. Those who did not join Mr. Tuttle's church became scattered.

In this connection it may be said that about 1745-50 Elder Park Avery, a Separate minister, fitted up a large room in the house, on Poquonock plain, which James Avery had built in 1656, and used it for public worship. "There he and the church which he had gathered held public service for a great many years." When these gatherings ceased the Separate worship came to an end in Groton.

A Separate Society was formed in the "Long Society," Preston. In her history of Norwich, Miss

Caulkins says, "Meetings were held in that society, but it is not known that a church was organized." Since she wrote, the original records of the Preston Separate church have come to light. In these records, under date of May 17, 1752, it is stated that a letter had been received from the Long Society, desiring the Preston church to send messengers "to assist in ordaining a pastor." June 5, this messenger reported that "The Evidence was Clear that Jonathan Storey Was Called of God and Chosen by ye Church to ye office of a Pastor who was ordained by ye laying on of hands by ye Churches' Presbyters: namely: Elder Hide [Norwich Town]: Eldr John Palmer [Scotland]: Eld Paul Parke and Joseph Elderkin Brother." This record points to a church in the Long Society and fixes the date of Mr. Story's ordination between May 17 and June 5, 1752. August 5, 1752, the Preston church met with the church in the Long Society, to consider the case of Samuel Gore who had communed with the former church but refused to do so more, giving as a reason his disbelief in infant baptism. Two years later the Preston church sent delegates to the church in the Long Society on the occasion of the ordination of a deacon. May 21, 1758, the Preston Church again responded to a letter from the church in the Long Society, and sent messengers "to Give them advice Respecting there Broken Scatred Condition." May 19, 1765, the Preston church records the admission of Mrs. Nathaniel Giddings to its

communion. She had formerly been a member of the Separate church in the Long Society, "and when that Chh was broek and Dissolved she with others were Recommended by a Council to any Chh they were minded to join with of ye same Constitution." These minutes show conclusively that a Separate church was organized in the western part of Preston, known then as East Norwich, or the Long Society; that its pastor was ordained in 1752; that it existed about thirteen years; and that its remaining members were scattered among the neighboring Separate churches, upon the recommendation of the Council that dissolved the church. This whole proceeding, and the records of the Preston church touching its sister church, have an exceedingly strong flavor of modern Congregationalism.

There was also a Separate movement at Bozrah, then called Norwich Plains. Bliss Willoughby was probably ordained its pastor in 1756. Of its further history we have no knowledge. The movement was of short duration.

A Separate church was organized in Somers in 1769. The First Church, on the death of Mr. Leavitt, in 1761, became greatly distracted, and was divided. Part became Separates and built a meeting-house. Mr. Ely became their pastor from 1769 to 1774. He afterwards was prominent in Shay's rebellion in western Massachusetts, and died in prison. For thirteen years after the death of Mr. Leavitt the First Church was pastorless. In Au-

gust, 1774, Dr. Backus became the pastor. Under him the two churches became one again, the Separates returning in great harmony to the fold whence they had gone out.

In Prospect, a Separate church was organized between 1770 and 1780. Benjamin Beach was pastor for several years. In 1798 the present church was formed. The Separates were unable to support the gospel, alone, and most of them united with the new church. The old Separate meeting-house was occupied, at first, by the new society, having been repaired in 1801.

In 1786 a Strict Congregational society was formed in Torrington by several members who withdrew from the regular church. They commenced the erection of a house of worship. In March, 1787, by vote of the church, Lemuel Haynes, a colored preacher, a man of great shrewdness and wit, and who ministered to various white congregations for about fifty years, was chosen pastor. Though not installed he held this office about two years. In 1791, by the aid of a council the two churches adopted new articles of faith and a covenant, and were reunited.

In Bethlehem, in Coventry and in New Milford the spirit of Separation manifested itself to some extent, but not to such a degree as to crystalize into Separate societies. In Haddam there were movements towards Separation. A society was formed in 1785. In 1792 they professed Baptist principles,

and were received into the fellowship of that denomination.

These are the principal instances of separation from the standing order. Several returned to the fellowship of the churches from which they had gone out. Three still remain in Connecticut: South Killingly, the South Church in Middletown, and the church in Torrington. Of the last two Dr. McEwen says that they "as churches . . . became Separates," but soon reverted to their original connection with Congregationalists. It seems, however, that the church in Middletown was gathered as a Separate church, as we have already seen. In several cases the church became Baptist. In one or two instances a Universalist church resulted. In one case a colony of Shakers was the final issue. The church in Canterbury, it is claimed, became Separate as a church. But it became extinct. Only two or three survived into the ninteenth century. That in Preston seems to have been the last to disappear. The church in Canterbury, during its comparatively brief life, seems to have been the leading church of the order.

In Massachusetts, as we have seen, a number of the Separates embraced the Baptist faith. Backus says that "more than threescore members of the Separate church in Sturbridge, including all their officers were baptized in 1749." In September of the same year Elder Ebenezer Moulton of Brim-

field baptized several in Bridgewater and in Raynham, who left the Separate churches in those towns. He adds that Baptist elders "baptized many in the Separate churches of Connecticut, and it seemed as though all those churches would become Baptists." But, as we have seen, it was impossible for the Separates, who believed in sprinkling and infant baptism, to unite with the Baptists, who did not believe in these ordinances, and so there were few cases in which Separate churches went over to that communion.

A council of Separate churches was held at South Killingly, September 19, 1781, to agree upon matters of discipline, a confession of faith, and other questions pertaining to the welfare of the churches. This seems to have been the inauguration of the custom of holding yearly meetings on the third Thursday in September. It was also, without doubt, the beginning of the "Strict Congregational Convention of Connecticut," which, as we have seen, exercised jurisdiction in Long Island till a convention was organized there in 1791. The decay of the churches which comprised it soon brought an end to the convention. As but two or three societies survived the century, it is reasonable to conclude that the Convention did not. The last general meeting, of which the records of the Preston church make mention, was held in 1797.

VII

CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters tell the story of a religious movement which took place chiefly between 1740 and 1755. A few societies were former later, but they did not reach any considerable size or influence. The movement, for reasons which will suggest themselves, never spread far beyond its original limits, within which it was mainly confined. As has been seen, it began in eastern Connecticut as an indirect result of the great revival; as a direct protest, on the part of earnest men and women, against the loose practice and discipline of the churches established under the Saybrook Platform. The movement was attended with not a few extravagances; yet we cannot but sympathize with the motive that was behind it. The Separates believed, with the early Fathers of New England, and with Hooker of Hartford, and with Davenport of New Haven, that only regenerate persons were eligible to church estate. They therefore stopped all who sought admission thereto, at the door of the church, to enquire as to their religious experience, and as to the evidence which they gave of regenerate character. In this important particular the established churches, as we have seen, had grown exceedingly remiss; and this remissness the Separates could not

endure. Dr. Oliver W. Means, in his story of the Strict Congregational Church of Enfield, says, "A careful study of the inner life of the Separatist Church of Enfield will lead to the conclusion that, in common with other churches of the same order, this church stood in stubborn opposition to certain worldly practices that had gathered about the established churches of that day."

The Separates also believed, as is shown by their declarations of belief and practice, that Christ alone, and not any civil power, of any sort whatsoever, was the source of all authority in the church, and therefore that the church, as his body, was competent to manage and direct its local affairs, without the interference of the State. Here they certainly occupied ground held by the Separatists of Scrooby, more than a century and a quarter before, by the Fathers of New England, and by the Congregational churches of to-day. In both these contentions we must take sides with them as against the civil power and the churches arrayed against them. They simply stood on the ground on which the churches of New England were originally organized. The fact that almost, if not quite, without exception, these churches adopted the Cambridge Platform of 1648, proves that their ecclesiastical polity was an expression of primitive New England Congregationalism. And as their idea of the church was in so complete accord with views so generally prevalent now, we must admit that they were, at

least in this one respect, a hundred years in advance of their time. Their break with the old Puritan idea of a parish, which was a legacy inherited from the State establishments of Europe, was none too emphatic and came none too soon. A civil body, organized to manage the affairs of Christ's visible Church, was their peculiar aversion; and with good reason. The modern movement to enable churches to manage their own material affairs, without the intervention of a parish, often constituted of men of the world, in no sympathy with the Church, is only an effective expression of the idea of the Separates of Connecticut, more than a hundred and fifty years ago.

It is in Puritanism in New England that we find the first beginnings of some of the views which are perpetuated in modern Unitarianism. First was the view, which found formal expression in the Half-Way Covenant, that a personal experience of the new birth was not necessary to church membership if the life were outwardly correct. Next was the view which magnified the parish at the expense of the church. The Separates preserved the traditional theories and Congregationalism of the Pilgrims, and insisted that the church, without a secular helm, the parish, was autonomous in both financial and spiritual management. In this respect also they were in advance of their day.

The Saybrook Platform, as it was endorsed by the Connecticut legislature, October, 1708, was ac-

companied by the toleration act, of the previous May, entitled "for the ease of such as soberly dissent." But, as we have seen, this act was repealed, in May, 1743, and all liberty was gone for all who could show nothing to differentiate them from Congregationalists or Presbyterians. The ecclesiastical establishment in Connecticut was as rigorous and unsparing as that from which the Fathers had fled in 1608 and 1630. It continued till 1784, when the Saybrook Platform, by act of the legislature, ceased to be binding. It cannot be denied that the Separate churches were, in their simple ecclesiastical polity, more in accord with the democratic character of our modern Congregational churches, than those which adopted the Presbyterial provisions of the Saybrook Platform. The name which they chose for themselves—Strict Congregational Churches—shows that they claimed to adhere strictly to the democratic form of church organization, while they charged against the State churches, and not without reason, that they were partly Presbyterial.

In view of these facts the collapse of the whole movement within half a century creates surprise, and awakens the suspicion that there was in it some fatal structural weakness. A movement in which was so much to commend could not so completely disappear, leaving scarcely anything but its history behind it, unless there were some radical defects in it. The course of the Separates was in

open defiance of law, and, as we have seen, brought upon them most bitter persecution, as well as arrayed against them all the powerful social influence of the established churches. But their decay was due to deeper causes, inherent in the movement itself. Persecution and opposition did not crush out the Separatists of Scrooby, nor the Puritans who settled around Massachusetts Bay. Further, the most rapid decline of the Separates of Connecticut dates from the year when the legislature grudgingly granted the petition of the church at South Killingly to be relieved from taxation to support the minister of the regular church. But the relief came too late. Their original leaders were dead in most cases, and they were cast down by discouragement. They were torn by internal dissensions. In many cases there were irreconcilable differences upon the question of baptism, which could have but one issue. Soon after the death of Solomon Paine the Canterbury church ceased. In twenty years the Mansfield church had run its course. In 1806 the Enfield church had come to an end. The Preston church owed itself to Paul Park, its pastor for over fifty years. Its length of life and growth were due to his industry and influence. Though it existed several years after his death, living an irregular, lingering life, till about 1817, it practically died with him.

Something is radically wrong in any church whose life and vigor are so dependent upon any per-

son. Several causes may be pointed out in the Separate movement, which limited its influence and its life. It often began and continued in a kind of emotional excess. These people confounded religious experience with certain sensuous emotions, and judged the former by the degree of the latter. They regarded certain bodily contortions as necessary evidences of the presence and the workings of the Spirit. They measured zeal by the violence of one's action, and accused ministers, who were moderate in their style of preaching, with lacking unction. The doctrine of perfection, in its objectionable, fleshly form, crept in among some of them. In some cases they went to even greater excesses than when Davenport was their leader. Some of them, says Tracy, became, "in their own esteem too holy to receive the ordinances from any such minister as was then on earth, and therefore baptized each other." In some cases, narrated by Backus, they ignored the obligation of the marriage vows, and scandalous results were notorious. Happily, such instances were rare. But those which existed showed the danger of a false zeal, which defeats itself. The extravagances of the movement, and in which those concerned in it persisted, helped to deprive it of much of the power and influence which otherwise would have attended it.

The weakness of the movement was, in a measure, attributable to another cause. We refer to the illiteracy and lack of education on the part of

both its leaders and its rank and file. The charge given to Paul Park, when he was ordained over the Preston church, not to premeditate what he should say, when preaching, illustrates the prevalent spirit of the Separates. They believed that human learning, especially as related to declaring the truth of God, was a snare and a delusion, liable to lead men into error. They professed, therefore, to rely solely and directly upon the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost. This contempt of learning, not only in the people themselves, but also in their leaders, brought forth the natural fruits of ignorance, coupled with false zeal and a certain degree of superstition. It resulted, often, in a strange misunderstanding of the Bible. Their leaders were usually men taken from their own membership, and ordained as their pastors, without any preparation for their work. As a consequence they usually attracted to themselves the less stable portion of the community, and those persons who love to run after novelties in religion. Naturally, their hold was not strong upon a vigorous and permanent life. Nor were they able always to exert a commanding influence in the communities where they were planted. There were, of course, here and there exceptions. But these were of a character to prove the rule.

Their claim to what they called "the key of knowledge," was still another source of weakness. By this they meant that Christ had given them the gift of the Spirit in such measure that they could infalli-

bly tell a Christian from one who is not, as readily as "a sheep may be known from a dog," and that those only "with whom they held communion in the inward actings of their own souls were Christians." Doubtless there are tests, given in the Word of God, by which disciples may be known. But the fact that councils were called with great frequency, by many of the Separate churches, to settle cases of discipline, proves that sometimes their "key of knowledge" did not fit the lock. A good many of these churches, like the one in Enfield, were perpetually in trouble, because the brethren did not dwell together in unity. Besides, their claims to an intuitive knowledge of Christian character led them into great extravagances in church discipline. Their excessive zeal for a pure church often overdid the matter. Their tests were frequently more sentimental than real. An excess of joy, an outward view of Christ, visions which some of them claimed to have, and similar proofs were applied and depended on by them, to determine whether men had been born again. The success of this method is best told by their oft recurring cases of discipline, which kept churches in a constant turmoil. Miss Larned, in her history of Windham County, says, "But it was when turned upon themselves that the 'Key of Knowledge' did the greatest injury. 'Absolute certainty' of the spiritual condition of another on admission to the church membership did not prevent extreme distrust afterward. If a brother or sister did not feel

a positive interflowing of sympathy and affection with some particular person, some hidden sin was the cause, which must be sought out, detected, confessed, and brought to judgment before they could commune together at the Lord's table." The result was that, to the detriment of the church, the most trivial things were made occasions of complaint and discipline. No other cause more rapidly hastened the decay and disintegration of the Separate churches. As an example, take the complaint of Joseph Markham against the church in Enfield. The charge, as appears in the finding of Solomon Paine of Canterbury, and Thomas Stevens of Plainfield, to whom the case was referred, was that, "Benj Simons servant to me the Subscriber has left the servis of me his Sd master to the Damig of my outward Estate and to the wounding of the cause of Christ, and this Church of Christ at Enfield has Countenanced the Sd benjamin in the leving of my Sd servis and fellowshiping with him in leving my sturidship hereby I shew my dislike and Requier the Sd Church to make gospel Sattisfaction for their So doing." It was further complained that, while Markham was in prison, the said Benjamin married contrary to Markham's advice, which, it was claimed, the church encouraged him to do, to the great detriment of the said Markham. This is given as an example of the trivial cases of discipline which were constantly rending these churches, weakening their power, and hastening their final disintegration.

Manifestly their "Key of Knowledge" was as little successful in securing the pure church of their dreams, as the loose practices of the standing churches, against which they protested.

There may have been other elements of weakness in the movement, but these were the principal ones, which were sure, soon or late, to bring it to grief. There was another reason for the final disappearance of these churches, which was not inherent in them. The loose practices, against which the Separates protested, finally disappeared, state control came to an end, and the religious liberty for which they contended was restored. The powerful preaching of Edwards, and the bold stand which he took against admitting to church membership any but regenerate persons, while it cost him his pastorate at Northampton, yet dealt a blow to the Half-Way Covenant and its practice, from which it never recovered. While it continued through the last half of the eighteenth century, it did so with a constantly diminishing hold upon the churches. The revivals with which that century closed, and the nineteenth century opened, finished the work, and the regular churches came back into the ways for which the Separates contended, both in discipline and in methods of support—the original Congregational ways of the Separatists of Scrooby. There was, therefore, no further reason for their separate organization. The end which they had in view was gained. It can hardly be said that the Separate

movement contributed very largely to the change in practice and discipline which finally took place in the regular churches. There was in it too little of real strength, and too much of structural weakness. Nevertheless, there is good reason for the words of the pastor of the South Congregational Church in Middletown, Conn.: "The Congregational church of to-day is stronger and better able to do its work, and has more faith in its own polity, unmixed with any stronger form of government because of the lesson which she so unwillingly learned from the Separatists."

Rev. Robert C. Learned, in *The New Englander* for 1853, calls this movement a "sad mistake." From some points of view it was. But the same spirit which led the men of Scrooby to leave the Established Church of England in the early part of the seventeenth century, led the Separates of New England to leave the churches of the "standing order," in the middle of the eighteenth century. The mistake of the latter was the mistake of the former, which we must forever be glad that they made.

The Separates of New England were for the most part sincere, honest, pious men and women. This was shown in their life and death. In many things their views were more correct than those of their opponents. The chief charge against them was their separation. Edwards, and those who agreed with him among the clergy, advised the

course of the old Puritans, who sought to reform the Church of England from within. The Separates took issue here, followed the men of Scrooby, and came out. Puritanism, with its parish, led straight back to the evils to be corrected. We incline to think that they took the only course open to them.

It was a decisive step, we think, in the right direction, and was not wholly without results. It is to be regretted, however, that a movement in which there were so great possibilities was defeated in large measure because those engaged in it, while honest and sincere, allowed themselves to be carried to such unreasonable extremes. There was abundant occasion for such a movement. The principles of liberty, expressed in the simple polity of Congregationalism, and that polity itself, were threatened by the oppressive and Presbyterianizing measures of the older and established churches of Connecticut, under the Saybrook Platform. Tracy very truly says, "From a candid consideration of the whole subject . . . it appears . . . that the prevalence of Separatism, and its concomitant errors and evils, was far less extensive than it has usually been represented; that the amount of evil fairly chargeable to this source in the whole country, has been greatly overestimated, while the good which it aided to accomplish, has not been acknowledged." So then the Separate movement served its purpose, had its influence, gave in its testimony for a pure

church, helped to save primitive Congregationalism, contributed considerably to the building up of the churches of the Baptist order, and made an interesting and instructive chapter in the ecclesiastical history of New England.